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PLANTINGA ON THEISTIC BELIEF

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	Submitted to the	
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ABSTRACT

PLANTINGA ON THEISTIC BELIEF

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By Curtis P. Paulsen

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ABSTRACT

PLANTINGA ON THEISTIC BELIEF

By Curtis P. Pauzenga

In his God and Other Minds (New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1967) Professor Alvin Plantinga seeks an answer to the question of whether belief in God can be rationally justified. His proposal is that belief in the existence of God and belief in the existence of other minds are on the same epistemic footing - such that if one is considered rational, the other must likewise be considered rational.

The problem central to this thesis is the question of whether Plantinga's primary contention is sound. I wish to argue that Plantinga's reliance on the analogical argument as the best justification for other minds is not suitably supported. My reason for this claim is that P.F. Strawson's position does not appear, on Plantinga's account, to be shown unacceptable. If this is correct, Strawson's "justification" for belief in other minds can be considered at least as acceptable as the analogical argument. That Strawson's view can then be considered preferable to the analogical argument results (1) from the inherent weaknesses of the analogical argument, and (2) from the fact that Strawson's view would provide the element of logical certainty which we seek in a justification for belief in other minds.

Still, Plantinga's major claim is extremely comprehensive, and the considerations encompassed by that claim are themselves the subjects of contention. Plantinga's conclusion concerning the teleological argument is that the argument is sound, but in a very limited sense. Given the limitations which are placed on the argument's success, I wish to argue that what the argument finally shows cannot be of very much interest. Whether this suggests anything of a broader assessment with regard to the theistic enterprise remains a question only sketchily treated in this thesis.

Plantinga's discussion of the teleological argument takes into account Hume's position regarding the argument. Insofar as this is the case, Hume's views will play a substantial role in my discussion of Plantinga's enterprise. The major discrepancy I have found in Plantinga's analysis of Hume's position relates to Hume's views concerning the problem of evil. It will be my position that Hume offers a stronger case for atheism than Plantinga suggests.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In a recent book entitled God and Other Minds¹, Alvin Plantinga attempts to speak to the question "Can belief in God be rationally justified?" A major portion of Plantinga's enterprise involves a critical examination of the conventional attempts at proving Divine existence. While each of these attempts, according to the author, have some major weakness, the teleological argument comes closest to succeeding.

Plantinga's contribution to the question of belief in God is his tentative contention that belief in God is at least as rational as belief in other minds. As he states his conclusion,

If my belief in other minds is rational, so is my belief in God. But obviously the former is rational; so, therefore, is the latter.²

Plantinga's conclusion rests upon the truth of the assertion that belief in God and belief in other minds are epistemically the same sort of problems - that, as Plantinga asserts, they are "in the same epistemological boat."

The two arguments which are taken to be epistemically related are the teleological argument for the existence of God, and the analogical argument for the existence of other minds. The most straight-forward

interpretation of the phrase "in the same epistemological boat," when reference is to these two arguments, is that both take the same type of argument form (i.e. analogical, hence inductive). Hence, part of the meaning is also that these arguments each their consequents with a similar degree of logical certainty.

I suspect that if one can claim "equal certainty" for any two propositions which we take to be true, he can do so only if the arguments obtaining these propositions are of a similar type - that they are either both inductive or both deductive. Assuming that each argument is a sound one, the result of any comparison between an inductive and a deductive argument will always be that the deductive argument affords more logical certainty. On the other hand, if two deductive arguments are sound, their consequents will be equally certain. Where the two propositions are each achieved inductively, however, it becomes more difficult to assign "equal certainty." Such assignment might well require, say, the premise-by-premise application of a probability calculus.

The question of certainty will arise here with respect to Plantinga's claim, but in reference to the question of whether there are better logical reasons to suppose that other minds exist, and better logical reasons to suppose that God does not exist. It surely is the case that an inductive argument affords the least degree of certainty for its conclusions. Consequently, if any belief can be justified by non-inductive means, that belief will clearly be better grounded so far as logical certainty is concerned.

If Plantinga's claim concerning epistemic consonance is finally to be useful, he must show that each of the two arguments mentioned above

is the best we have for treating the respective question which each argument intends to resolve. My contention is that the analogical argument does not provide the best justification for other minds. Strawson's format for "descriptive metaphysics" will provide the direction for my claim, and it is Strawson's specific view concerning the necessity of the existence of other minds which will be offered as a preferable "justification" for belief in other minds.

I wish to show that Plantinga's specific claim to epistemic similarity should be denied (i.e. that theistic belief and belief in other minds are justifiable via the same form of argument, and that both beliefs are grounded in a similar degree of certainty). I will presume that epistemic similarity obtains in a far more general sense - that there are basic questions concerning belief which apply to both of the particular beliefs at issue here.

Again, any sound non-inductive argument justifying belief in other minds will surely be preferable to the analogical argument - this because of the increased degree of certainty which a non-inductive argument affords. Still, my approach here is largely a negative one. I wish to argue that Plantinga has not shown Strawson's position to be unacceptable, and hence there is no reason, on Plantinga's account, to suppose that Strawson's position is not acceptable. Further, there is then no reason for us to fall back on the analogical argument - and inductive argument, and one with its own particular difficulties.

In keeping with Plantinga's judgment, the teleological argument will be accepted here as the best argument for justifying belief in God. Whether or not this judgment is finally sound makes little difference.

relative to a criticism of Plantinga's major thesis. As is the case with any analogy, only one side of Plantinga's analogy between belief in God and belief in other minds need be falsified in order to show the analogy to be false. Again, my criticism will be directed at the "other minds" side of the analogy.

Still, the comparison which Plantinga draws is a fascinating one insofar as a great deal of superlative care is taken in the treatment of the teleological argument. As is also the case with the analogical argument for other minds, the teleological argument is cited as the best answer to the question it is supposed to treat, but as an argument which still experiences its difficulties. Plantinga's exposition of these difficulties, as well as the success of the argument, is based, in one way or another, upon Hume's criticism of the argument, and that exposition involves an intricate treatment of the Humean enterprise.

Chapter II here will be largely expository in nature, and is intended to provide a view as to how Plantinga reconstructs and criticizes the teleological argument. The first portion of Chapter II will be somewhat more general in scope, insofar as I wish to comment on Plantinga's general intent in treating the question of theistic belief. Chapter III treats a matter which evolves out of Plantinga's discussion of the teleological argument (viz. the question of the problem of evil, when offered as evidence against theism). In Chapter IV, Strawson's position will be offered as an option to the analogical argument, with Plantinga's criticisms of Strawson included in that discussion. In Chapter V, I wish to extend the general emphasis of Strawson's view in such a way as to speak to the question "Is it rational to believe in God?"

There are four specific claims for which I wish to argue in this paper. While cited here, these claims are somewhat more fully described on page 70 of Chapter V. Briefly stated, then, I wish to claim that

- (1) The negative evidence relative to traditional theistic belief is stronger than the supporting evidence.
- (2) The analogical argument for the existence of other minds speaks to only a quasi-problem.
- (3) Belief in other minds is "Justifiable" in a tangential manner, via an argument based upon the premise that our conventional language about "persons" provides a sound basis for the necessary truth of the propositions that
 - (a) other minds exist, and
 - (b) behavioral criteria provides a sound means for correct third-person ascriptions.
- (4) Certain theological propositions might be "meaningful" in spite of the fact that no natural empirical evidence (either affirmative or negative) obtains.

CHAPTER II

GOD BY ANALOGY: THE TELEOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

Plantinga's intent in God and Other Minds is to examine the rationale for belief in the God of the Hebraic-Christian tradition. This would surely be a simpler matter if Western theism was a tradition of natural theology, but this is quite obviously not the case. Consequently, to show that the natural theologian's "belief" is at least in some degree rational would still not be much of a boon to rank and file theism. I suspect that the only time natural theology really arises in the Western tradition is when the enterprising theist attempts to accommodate the natural atheist on the latter's own grounds. To force the hand of those natural theologians who are such traditionalists at heart will likewise not get at the tradition. A Kierkegaardian "belief in spite of" will still remain a viable option - particularly if the natural evidence for a given "theological" proposition neither directly conflicts with nor directly affirms that proposition. The question finally reduces to that of what evidence will be considered acceptable.

In some cases where the tenets of natural and revealed theology coincide, the question concerning justified belief can become somewhat more involved. When there is no natural evidence to support or refute a theological proposition, and when the theist offers revelation as a

source for evidence, the question is shifted to that of the legitimacy of the theistic evidence offered. Now in light of the absence of any conflicting natural evidence - in light of the absence of any natural evidence whatever - the particular theistic belief in question might not be quite so open to philosophical criticism.

If such a belief could not be recommended on any sound epistemological basis, there surely might be other "theological" reasons for accepting the proposition in question. Now certain beliefs which are "recommended" in this manner might still be "acceptable,"³ and this matter will be treated, if rather sketchily, in Chapter V.

A primary contention in this paper, however, is that the natural evidence at our disposal does serve to provide a strong case against natural theism. If natural theism finally resorts to the principles of revealed theology (though the phrase "reverts back" might be preferable here) when such a case is made out, a different - though not unrelated - case should be introduced, one which should involve fundamental questions concerning the decision to believe anything which has no relationship to natural evidence. Still, if traditional theism is seriously at issue, even the most moderately comprehensive analysis should provide some bridge to these considerations.

A teleological argument for Divine existence is an argument from the purposiveness of nature to the existence of an intelligent Being equal to the task of creating the intricate design of the natural order. Hume provided a classic statement of the teleological argument in his Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion.⁴ In the words of the interlocutor Cleanthes, Hume states:

Look round the world: contemplate the whole and every part of it: you will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions, to a degree beyond what human faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their most minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy which ravishes into admiration all men, who have contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the production of human contrivance; of human design, thought, wisdom and intelligence. Since therefore the effects resemble one another, we are led to infer, by all rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the author of nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man: though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work, which he has executed.⁵

Plantinga does not attempt to show that the teleological argument is an uncomprimisingly sound one, but only that the argument is more successful than its cosmological and ontological counterparts. Now if the teleological argument has enjoyed any more success than the ontological and cosmological arguments, the reason might well be, as Plantinga points out, that the nature of the argument itself makes assessment more difficult. In developing this observation Plantinga states that

[the] difficulty arises mainly, perhaps, from the circumstance that it is an inductive or analogical argument; and the logic of such argumentation is not nearly as well understood as the logic of deductive argument. Furthermore, questions involving degrees of difference between widely disparate classes of things (does the universe resemble a machine more than it does an animal? or is it more like a vegetable?) become essentially relevant; and it is hard indeed to see how to answer them.⁶

Plantinga suggests that the following set of selected propositions might have relevance to the teleological argument:

- (a) The universe is designed.
- (b) The universe is designed by exactly one person.
- (c) The universe was created ex nihilo.
- (d) The universe was created by the person who designed it.
- (e) The creator of the universe is omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good.

- (f) The creator of the universe is an eternal spirit, without body, and in no way dependent upon physical objects.⁷

His conclusion regarding these propositions, however, is that, with the possible exception of (a), the teleological argument in no way sufficiently establishes their validity. As he states,

the teleological arguer may have some evidence (not very strong, perhaps, but not completely negligible) for (a); but with respect to (b)-(f) our total evidence affords in each case an argument against it as strong as any it yields for it.⁸

It seems sufficient here to simply accept, even if tentatively, the possibility that someone might wish to base these propositions on the design argument. With a little imagination, one can certainly conceive of arguments which could draw out this connection. Furthermore, each of these propositions does constitute a vital tenet of conventional theism. If there is any possible connection with the teleological argument, each is hence well worth inclusion in a treatment of that argument. It might also be added that if these vital tenets have any relevance to natural theology in general, they are relevant to the primary question raised in God and Other Minds.

Plantinga's intent is to evaluate the teleological argument on the basis of the total evidence which might be advanced for (a)-(f). To approach the argument in this manner involves the isolation of the teleological principle which is reflected in each of the individual propositions - the principle that the universe resembles a product of intelligent design. Hume's conclusion was that there is no sufficiently good reason to accept that principle, and based upon that conclusion, none of the propositions (a)-(f) would be presumed true.

Plantinga's conclusion is that the resemblance principle might hold true in support of (a), but that it can support none of the propositions (b)-(f). Based, then, on the total evidence for (a)-(f), Plantinga finds the teleological argument to enjoy only limited success, though it is not altogether ineffectual.

According to Plantinga, the teleological argument can be provided the following basic formulation:

- (1) The "productions of human contrivance" are the products of intelligent design.
- (2) The universe resembles the productions of human contrivance.
- (3) Therefore probably the universe is a product of intelligent design.
- (4) Therefore probably the author of the universe is an intelligent being.⁹

Again, Hume's contention was that the universe does not sufficiently resemble a product of human (intelligent) design. Hence, Plantinga's enterprise is to circumvent Hume's objection in order to provide a justification for (2).

On Hume's account, the universe does not sufficiently exhibit the "curious adaptation of means to ends" that is exhibited by objects of human contrivance, and thus there is no ground for the move to "the universe is a product of intelligent design."¹⁰ While it is difficult to capture Hume's complete objection in any brief fashion, Plantinga's statement of the design argument provides a nucleus to which Hume's criticisms can be applied.

In responding to Hume's objection, Plantinga states the following:

An analogical argument may have the following form:

- (a) (5) The members of class α have A.
- (6) a resembles the members of .
- (7) Therefore probably a also has A.

Now if a resembles the members of α , there will be some (possibly complex) property that it shares with them. This property will determine a class; wherever there is an argument of form (a), therefore, there will be one of the following form:

- (b) (8) The members of α are members of β and have A.
- (9) a is a member of β .
- (10) Probably a has A.

And the argument from design as stated by Cleanthes can easily be recast so as to fit this form. α would be the class of "objects of human contrivance"; β would be the class of thing "exhibiting the curious adaptation of means to ends" or the "nice adjustment of means to ends"; A would be the property of being the product of intelligent design and a would be the universe.

Now if it happens that the members of α are the only members of β of which we know whether or not they have the property A, we can restate the argument as follows:

- (c) (11) Every member of β of which we know whether or not it has A, in fact has A.
- (12) a is a member of β .
- (13) Therefore probably a has A.

Since, in Plantinga's words,

we do not know of any member of the class of things exhibiting curious adaptation of means to ends that is not the product of conscious and intelligent design: even if we know that a thing was not designed by man we do not know that God did not design it, unless we already know that God did not design the universe (in which case it is pointless to consider the teleological argument),¹¹

the following restatement might be offered:

- [d] (14) Everything that exhibits curious adaptation of means to ends and is such that we know whether or not it was the product of intelligent design, in fact was the product of intelligent design.
- (15) The universe exhibits curious adaptation of means to ends.

of her position and situation. And what new and unknown principles would actuate her in so new and unknown a situation as that of the formation of a universe, we cannot, without the utmost temerity, pretend to determine.¹⁴

In these passages and others like them, Hume would seem to be making the strong claim that the universe is unique - so unique that one could not seriously pretend to compare it with any other class of objects in the realm of our experience. In short, there seems to be nothing tentative, questioning, in Hume's manner.

Whatever the mood of Hume's inquiry, however, it does seem correct, on Plantinga's account, that there simply are some classes of things in which the universe can be placed - say, to use his examples, very large or very old things. The strategic question, of course, is whether the universe can be placed in the reference class which the teleological arguer suggests, viz. the class to which products of human design belong (the class of objects "exhibiting the curious adoption of means to ends" cf. θ). The answer to this question determines, finally, whether an inference should be made to "the universe is a product of intelligent design" (cf. [13]).

If Hume's aim is to preclude the question of which reference class should be chosen, showing that the question is a legitimate one (i.e. that the universe is not unique) will still leave the teleological arguer with the problem of selecting the best class to which the universe can be compared. While this question would seem secondary to Hume's primary aim, he does meet the teleological arguer (Cleanthes) on his own ground when he states,

If we see a house. . . we conclude, with the greatest certainty, that it had an architect or builder; because this is precisely

(16) Therefore, the universe is probably the product of intelligent design.¹²

Formulation (c) is intended to be stronger than (a) and (b), and [d] is simply the long form of (c).

At this point Plantinga offers a couple of suggestions as to what Hume might mean in his objection, and then proceeds to show that neither interpretation invalidates the suggested formulation of the argument. In the first case Hume might be interpreted to stright-forwardly assert that "the universe is unique." On the other hand, he might simply be questioning the possibility of assigning a reference class (viz. β) to which the 'universe' might belong. While the first interpretation certainly seems to assert something stronger than the second, I find it difficult to find passages which would warrant the view that the second interpretation alone best captures Hume's intent. Consider a portion of the passage to which Plantinga refers:

To ascertain this reasoning, it were requisite that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not sufficient, surely, that we have seen ships and cities arise from human art and contrivance.¹³

Further,

But were we ever so much assured, that a thought and reason, resembling the human, were to be found throughout the whole universe, and were its activity elsewhere vastly greater and more commanding than it appears in this globe: Yet I cannot see, why the operations of a world, constituted, arranged, adjusted, can with any propriety be extended to a world, which is in its embryo-state, and is advancing towards that constitution and arrangement. By observation, we know somewhat of the economy, action, and nourishment of a finished animal; but we must transfer with great caution that observation to the growth of a fetus in the womb, and still more, to the formation of an animalcule in the loins of its male parent. Nature, we find, even from our limited experience, possesses an infinite number of springs and principles, which incessantly discover themselves on every change

that species of effect, which we have experienced to proceed from that species of cause. But surely you will not affirm, that the universe bears such a resemblance to a house, that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect. The dissimilitude is so striking, that the utmost you can here pretend to is a guess, a conjecture, a presumption concerning a similar cause; and how that pretension will be received in the world, I leave you to consider.¹⁵

Plantinga's claim is that Hume leaves the teleological arguer with no rules for selecting an adequate reference class to which the universe might belong, and that claim seems to me to be correct. While the above talk of primary aims could serve to account for Hume's "oversight," the fact of that omission remains. Unless the universe is unique, what the universe does or does not resemble becomes largely a difference of opinion. In lieu of any such binding rule governing this resemblance, there is nothing to prevent the arguer from claiming that the universe does exhibit the "curious adaptation of means to ends" which all products of human design exhibit. To be sure, this claim must be tempered by the various dissimilarities that Hume suggests; but all this amounts to is that the analogy is at best a weak one. Such qualifications cannot show the analogy to be entirely mistaken. Hence, a $\epsilon\theta$ does in some weak sense stand, and A_a (likewise in a weak sense) can then be obtained.

It is natural enough, Plantinga states, that

the members of any class resemble each other in some respect; the problem is to specify how much and in what respects the members of the sample class must resemble those of the reference class minus the sample class. . . But it is difficult if not altogether impossible to give rules for detecting the sorts of differences that disqualify an argument; and in criticizing the argument from design Hume does not do so.¹⁶

If Hume does not provide any rules for the extent to which a must resemble members of \mathcal{X} in order for A_a to follow, he does provide

suggestions as to what the universe might better be said to resemble. On Hume's account, the universe might rather resemble an animal or a vegetable - even a human being - than a "product of human design." As Plantinga points out, however, these things, while not human contrivances, do belong to the reference class denoted by the 'universe'. As such, the question is whether these things resemble the sample class (i.e. the products of human design).¹⁷

The upshot of Plantinga's argument is that conventional theism's proposition (a) ("The universe is designed") is not falsified by Hume's account. On the other hand, Plantinga concludes that propositions (b)-(f) cannot be achieved by the teleological argument.

Against (b) ("The universe is designed by exactly one person.") Plantinga cites the Humean claim that a committee of dieties might just as well have designed the universe. In short, polytheism remains just as viable a notion as monotheism, and consider Hume's argument to that effect:

On B. And what shadow of an argument, continued PHILO, can you produce, from your hypothesis, to prove the unity of the Deity? A great number of men join in building a house or ship, in rearing a city, in framing a commonwealth: Why may not several Deities combine in contriving and framing a world? This is only so much greater similarity to human affairs. By sharing the work among several, we may so much farther limit the attributes of each, and get rid of that extensive power and knowledge, which must be supposed in one Deity, and which, according to you, can only serve to weaken the proof of his existence. And if such foolish, such vicious creatures as man can yet often unite in framing and executing one plan; how much more those Deities or Demons, whom we may suppose several degrees more perfect?¹⁸

Plantinga does not specifically comment on (c) ("The universe was created ex nihilo."), but perhaps he has in mind Hume's arguments in part VII or the Dialogues. In that section Hume argues that the principle of

"generation" is one standard by which we understand natural cause and effect relationships; an animal, for example, "bestows order and organization" on its offspring, and so on throughout such a lineage. Now where final causes are concerned, Hume states,

We must stop somewhere. . . nor is it ever within the reach of human capacity to explain ultimate causes, or show the last connections of any objects. It is sufficient, if the steps, so far as we go, are supported by experience and observation.¹⁹

To extend the limits of comprehension in a manner required by (c) would hence not be possible.

Plantinga discusses (d) ("The universe was created by the person who designed it.") in conjunction with (f) ("The creator of the universe is an eternal spirit, without body, and in no way dependent upon physical objects."), and I am not quite certain of his reasons for doing so. As he states,

our evidence affords an argument against it i.e. (f) in that every intelligent person we know about has had a body; so probably all intelligent persons have bodies, in which case the designer-creator of the universe cf. (d) does too.²⁰

On Plantinga's account, the relationship of (d) to (f) lies in the fact that both employ the notion of a "person." Now if that notion is rather subtly sneaked into (d), (f) is intended to describe the sense in which it is used. Still, the primary relevance of (d) to (e) and (f) and retrospectively to (c) lies in the fact that in each case a shift is made from "designer" to "creator," and the purpose of (d) is to facilitate that shift.

The difference between "creator" and "designer" should quite obviously lie in the difference between the two actions 'creating' and 'designing'. While the theist claims that the same "person" who designed

the universe also created it, there is nothing in the design argument to warrant this claim. It is simply the case that the products of human design are not always designed and created by one and the same person or persons. Hence, if Plantinga's critique of (d) does not seem particularly relevant, his claim that (d) is unsupported would surely seem justified.

The atheistic argument from evil is, of course, the basis for a refutation of (e) ("The creator of the universe is omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good."), and a discussion of Plantinga's position regarding that argument is included here in Chapter III.

Hume's refutation of (f) (again, one which Plantinga accepts) is based upon the contention that the notion of a disembodied mind - "spiritual substance" - is unequivocally "repugnant to human experience."²¹ Hence, no analogical argument could sustain this description of the Deity. This is the general basis for the argument which will be urged against (f) in Chapter V. Yet, the point of view out of which this similar contention arises will not, strictly speaking, be "Humean."

It is somewhat difficult to support a claim that any one of the propositions (a)-(f) is more vital to the theistic description of God than the rest. Still, the nature of the "God" sketchily spoken of in (a) might best be first enlarged upon by proposition (f). Proposition (e) also intends a direct description of the "intelligence" spoken of in proposition (a). If a notion of primary and secondary qualities can be employed here as an explicatory crutch, however, (f) would seem to suggest a "primary" quality while (e) seems to offer more of a "secondary" one. To put the point crassly, the question of whether God could exist

as a disembodied mind simply takes metaphysical priority over the question of whether "he" is at all malicious - even while both (e) and (f) offer more basic descriptions than (b)-(d).

None of the propositions (b)-(d) is as close to a basic description of the "intelligence" of (a) as are (e) and (f). (b) and (d), for example, each employs the term "person" in reference to God, but in a manner secondary to the primary claim of each assertion.

The metaphysical prejudices which place (f) on the top of the atheist's suspicion list have provided the basis for countless volumes, as well as the basis for what might be called non-professional atheism. These same prejudices are the ones that come into play relative to Plantinga's position concerning the question of other minds, hence what further comment might be offered on (f) is reserved for Chapter V.

If (e) also provides a basic description of the "intelligence" spoken of in (a), it also is in its own right a landmark for controversy. The question of Chapter III is whether there might be natural evidence available which can constitute a stronger case against (e) than the one which Plantinga suggests. The sort of evidence suggested in Chapter III, and in the same light, the sort of argument urged there against (e), is intended as a prelude to the perspective adopted in Chapters IV and V.

It is my opinion that Plantinga's conclusion regarding the teleological argument is successful, though quite possibly not unquestionably so. A primary question which might be raised concerns the sense in which (a) can be said to be confirmed while (b)-(f) are not. In the case of (b)-(f), Plantinga asserts on the one hand that the supporting evidence is "entirely ambiguous," and on the other hand that the evidence against

these propositions is as strong as the evidence for them. One would expect that these two claims concerning (b)-(f) are not concomitant. If the evidence for a proposition is completely ambiguous (i.e. insufficient for recommending belief in that proposition), the evidence against this proposition would be no stronger only if it also was completely ambiguous. Clearly, Hume's evidence against (b)-(f) is not completely ambiguous - a point which Plantinga certainly admits. Consequently it should not be the case, on Plantinga's account, that the "ambiguity" claim and "balanced evidenced" claim can be true together.

I suspect that Plantinga really intends the former claim i.e. that the supporting evidence for propositions (b)-(f) is insufficient for recommending belief in these propositions, although it is difficult to see why he should then have included the statement about ambiguity. One reason for this suspicion is that the notion of balanced evidence occurs again in his analysis of Hume's argument concerning evil. Still, this creates a further problem insofar as this notion is used there against Hume's position (as if to say an impasse results relative to available evidence). It is difficult to see that some cases of balanced evidence viz. (b)-(f) do not likewise result in such "impasses," and with the same implied result (i.e. a stand-off between opposing arguments - a situation which the term 'impasse' implies).

Now if Plantinga had shown such an impasse to exist in the case of (a), (and if (a) is still claimed to be sound) we might expect that he intended belief in (a) to be justified, say, in a sense hinted at on page 5 of this chapter (i.e. that some propositions are "acceptable" for belief precisely in light of the fact that the evidence for and against

them balances out). Furthermore, given the general claim of God and Other Minds, one's next guess might be that belief in other minds is to be justified in the above manner - and that this justified belief would somehow lend further support to the notion that belief in God is justified ("But obviously the former is rational; so, therefore, is the latter.")

This "justification" would not seem to arise, however, in the case of (a), though my reasons for this claim are admittedly rather elliptical. Consider the following argument:

(I) Either Hume's evidence against (b)-(f) and the theist's evidence for (b)-(f) is completely ambiguous (in which case a "balance of evidence" would occur), or one of the two bodies of evidence is stronger than the other.

(II) A balancing of evidence results in an impasse, such that the proposition in question can neither be affirmed nor denied (cf. the "impasse" re. the problem of evil).

But, That this balance of evidence does not occur in the case of (a)

(III) Plantinga takes (b)-(f) to be denied. in a very negative

Then since (I), (II), and (III), if in one way or another each of Hume's

(IV) Plantinga must consider Hume's evidence against (b)-(f) to be stronger than the theist's evidence for (b)-(f).

Now let (I)' be achieved by the substitution of (a) for (b)-(f), the universe does or does not resemble. Second, there is the claim that such that,

Hume offers no alternative resemblances which are better than that of the theist. So far evidence for (a) is completely ambiguous (in which case a "balance of evidence" would occur), or one of the two bodies of evidence is stronger than the other.

Given (II) as it stands, in somehow affords credence for that claim. 22

Now what (V) Plantinga takes (a) to be affirmed. highly disputable. Still, there might be something of value in that notion.

Hence, from (I)', (II), and (V),

- (VI) Plantinga must consider the theist's evidence for (a) to be stronger than Hume's evidence against (a).

Now as I interpret Plantinga's argument, there are no rules which prevent the teleological arguer from asserting "The universe resembles a product of human design (and hence A_a prop. [(16)], p. 15). As it seems then, the arguer makes a calculated gamble in asserting this resemblance - a risk insofar as the resemblance stands only in case a better one is not offered by the atheist. While Plantinga does argue against the relevancy of the claim that the universe resembles such things as plants or animals, he does not show that the resemblance suggested by the theist is the best resemblance relation possible. In short, there remains a possibility that another relation could at least be equally plausible, and hence a possibility that a "balance of evidence" could exist in the case of (a).

That this balance of evidence does not occur in the case of (a) is, on Plantinga's account, a contingency arrived at in a very negative manner. His intent is to disqualify in one way or another each of Hume's objections to the theist's resemblance claim ($a \notin \beta$). First and apparently primary is the claim that Hume provides no rule for deciding what the universe does or does not resemble. Second, there is the claim that Hume offers no alternative resemblances which are better than that of the theist. So far as any positive support goes, I can find none except for the claim (intended via Hume) that our natural propensity to make the theist's resemblance claim somehow affords credence for that claim.²² Now whether Hume intended this move is at best highly disputable. Still, there might be something of value in that notion.

If (a), taken by itself, can be validly derived and is not completely devoid of meaning, and further if there is a strong tendency among us to "see" design in the universe, there might be some reason to accord some weight to the design argument. Now the phrase "is designed" inherently means that some sort of "intelligence" is somehow involved. While the meaning of this phrase is just this sketchy, it is difficult to see where a deduction begins [eg. (b)-(f)] and where the self-contained meaning of "is designed" ends. Nonetheless, there would seem to be a hint, however sketchy, of first cause; and this hint should not be disregarded if, as on Plantinga's account, there is nothing to prevent the theist from asserting (a). It may be difficult to see why certain people are so captured by the notion that the universe looks to be designed. One might as Hume does, dismiss some such beliefs as "vulgar" or undisciplined commitments. Still it is indeed difficult to repudiate someone who cautiously accepts (a) while recognizing the perfunctory character of what (a) asserts - one who claims for the design argument absolutely nothing more than a bare minimum.

It seems to me that as long as there are such defenders of the teleological argument, the argument is likely to remain a thorn in natural atheism's side.

CHAPTER III

THE PROBLEM OF EVIL

Proposition (e) ("The creator of the universe is omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good.") constitutes a most important tenet for conventional theism. It is also a most interesting proposition since the ethical dimensions of the claim lead one onto a profoundly significant and notoriously controversial philosophical battleground. The atheistic argument from evil is the usual rebuttal provided for (e), and my interest in the proverbial problem of evil arises here out of a suspicion that Plantinga's primary conclusion concerning the argument, while finally correct, is correct for the wrong reasons. It is my contention that on Hume's account one can provide a more unified and perhaps stronger argument from evil than Plantinga perceives.

Plantinga views Hume's discussion of the problem of evil as admitting of two possible interpretations. On Plantinga's account, Hume might have intended (1) that the existence of evil states logically precludes the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God, or that (2) the evidence we have (i.e. the existence of apparently unjustified evil states of affairs) makes the existence of such a God less probable than that he exists. The difference between (1) and (2) lies in the logical force of the individual claims, for (1) involves the notion that all evil states of affairs are necessarily unjustified. The point of the

second interpretation, on the other hand, is that there is an unrecognized justification for God's having allowed evil states to exist - that the atheist's claim for the existence of "unjustified" evil states counts, on this second interpretation, as evidence against (e). Yet, the existence of an all-good and all-powerful God is not necessarily precluded (cf. interp. 1), for it might be the case that these states of evil are finally not "unjustified" at all.

If there might conceivably be a justification (though presently unrecognized) for God's having allowed all of the various individual states of evil to exist, then, on Plantinga's account, Hume's objection via the first interpretation presents far too strong a claim. Since the universal quantifier has here come into play, however, a brief qualification is in order.

The major reason for Plantinga's assertion that interpretation (1) presents too strong a claim lies in the notion that the atheist is hard pressed to show that all states of evil are necessarily unjustified. While this might be true enough in the verificationist's sense (i.e. How does one as a matter of fact verify the truth of any A proposition?), it might be possible - that the above proposition is true on the basis of the meanings involved.

In the portions to follow, I wish to assert that the conventional ethical meanings we have for such terms as "evil," "unjustified," and "omnipotence" lends support to the belief that where the question of Divine agency is involved, the proposition "All evil states are unjustified" is true. Since the theist cannot allow for the existence of a

single unjustified evil state, it is true that all the atheist needs is one clear case of unjustified evil.

Still, in order to achieve that single case, it seems to me that the atheist will be required to supply certain linguistic rules which connect the notions referred to earlier, and these rules should involve a statement of what these terms conventionally mean. Now this is not an easy matter, and it is precisely because of the difficulties involved in such an enterprise that the question of evil becomes a "problem." It is difficult enough to reach agreement on the meanings of most ethical terms, and these difficulties seem to be compounded when the meanings of "special" terms (eg. "omnipotence") come to be involved.

The purpose of this chapter is admittedly on rather unsteady ground in the first place, then, since I wish to assert that the meanings we do have for the relevant terms - including relevant "special" terms - are sufficient for a stronger refutation of (e) than Plantinga suggests. Based upon this contention, I will argue that "all evil states are unjustified" might well necessarily follow, and the conventional theistic claims intended to negate that proposition are based upon incorrect uses of the terms which comprise entail that proposition.

In the following passage, Plantinga provides a statement of what he takes to be the two possible interpretations of Hume's argument, though the order in which he discusses interpretations (1) and (2) is reversed here:

In the first place [the second interpretation], Philo may be asserting that the existence of evil disconfirms the existence of God; that is, offers evidence for the proposition that there is no God. This alone would not refute the argument, however,

for even if what we know about the world contains a set of propositions disconfirming the existence of God, it may contain another set confirming it. [cf. second interpretation] My total evidence may give me some reason for supposing that proposition false, but a stronger reason for supposing it true. Does Hume mean to add the first interpretation that the negative evidence from evil is so strong that the rest of our knowledge, no matter what it was, could not possibly furnish stronger evidence for God's existence? Although this seems a fairly natural reading of Hume, it is dubious indeed - or at any rate is much too strong a claim if the existence of God is logically compatible with the existence of evil.²³

According to Plantinga, the underlying axiom for interpretation (1) is that:

A proposition p confirms a proposition q so strongly that there is no proposition r (consistent with p) such that the conjunction of p with r confirms the denial of q, only if p entails q.²⁴

Now let (p) stand for "Evil exists," (q) for "'God' does not exist," and (r) for "'God' is justified in allowing every evil state to exist."

Plantinga's point, then, is that (r) is precluded only if it can clearly be shown that $\Box(p \supset q)$. It is at this juncture that Plantinga demurs, for his contention is that $\Box(p \supset q)$ is not an obvious truth, and that any attempts to refute (r) apart from the established truth of $\Box(p \supset q)$ results in a logical impasse based upon conflicting ethical positions - but positions which have the same degree of possible truth value.

Now on Plantinga's account, interpretation (1) represents too strong a claim to be an acceptable objection to "God's" existence, while (2) as a weaker claim constitutes a valid objection. He goes on to treat (1) as a separate claim, not directly related to the teleological argument. [(2) was related insofar as it represents a piece of evidence confuting one of the propositions concerning Divine nature, viz. (e).]

If my understanding of Plantinga is correct, I find it difficult in the first place to see that (1) is any less related to the teleological

argument (on Plantinga's account) than is (2). If one keeps in mind that (2) represents only one piece of the body of negative evidence brought to bear against the argument i.e. related only to proposition (e) , it remains difficult to see that (1) could be any broader in scope - that it might constitute a refutation of anything more than a single conventional notion concerning Divine nature. The distinction between (1) and (2) seems to lie in the difference in logical force between the two claims. What that should amount to, however, is that (1) (if correct) would provide a stronger refutation of (e).

Plantinga argues in chapter five of God and Other Minds that if the problem of evil is taken as a logical question, a logical impasse results between natural theology and natural atheology. It is difficult to see, however, that the problem of evil can finally come to be anything but a moral question, one which centers around the question of what constitutes a case of unjustified evil. I have found Plantinga's conclusion to chapter five particularly troublesome, insofar as he achieves his "impasse" by reducing the problem of evil to questions of Morality which are, in his words,

notoriously the sort of propositions about which careful and rational people can and do disagree.²⁵

What these propositions are will come out here a bit later, and I am troubled by Plantinga's seeming contention that if the problem of evil is reducible to questions of morality, the argument from evil should immediately fall prey to unresolvable conflicts of ethical opinion. In light of the difficulties I have alluded to earlier, some such an impasse is surely possible. Still, I do not find it clear that the occur-

rence of such an impasse should in any sense be guaranteed. To assume so at the outset would seem prematurely to grant too much to the theist's case.

It seems to me that the force of the second interpretation of Hume's argument lies precisely in the Humean contention that accepted moral positions do count as real pieces of evidence - evidence we actually have - in the question concerning proposition (e). Now if Plantinga's interpretation (1) is finally reducible in the sense described above (i.e. reducible to unresolvable ethical conflicts), I wish to contend that Hume's argument from evil does not admit of Plantinga's two separate interpretations - that Hume is making a strong logical case against (e) [cf. interp. 1], but a case based upon the value as actual evidence of conventional ethical meanings [cf. interp. 2]. In short, Hume is presenting a unified argument which employs in interdependent fashion the notions contained in both Plantinga's independent interpretations. While Hume would not have been inclined to express it in just this fashion, the strength of his argument might be seen to lie in the notion that our language about 'evil' (taken as a source of actual evidence) necessarily precludes the existence of an omnipotent and omnibenevolent God.

I will adopt Plantinga's general format for argument discussed here on pages 25 and 26 (relative to the axiom underlying the first interpretation of Hume's argument). Yet, I will view a reduction of the problem of evil to normative ethical questions as a move which facilitates the negation of proposition (r) ("God is justified in allowing every evil state to exist"), and hence the obtainment of $\neg(p \supset q)$. In

short, I wish to push Plantinga's conclusion concerning the problem of evil a bit further. Plantinga claims that the argument from evil can at best (i.e. via interp. 2) show only that the evidence against (e) appears as a contingent matter to be somewhat stronger than the evidence for that proposition - that the existence of the "God" described by (e) is not logically precluded. I wish to assert that given our conventional language concerning the notion of evil, accepted ethical meanings count as sound evidence in an argument which necessarily precludes the existence of the "God" of proposition (e).

Hume's discussion of the problem of evil can be found in part 10 of the Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. The following is a formulation of what I have taken to be Hume's argument.

P₁ Evil exists in the world.

P₂ God exists.

P₃ If God is unable to prevent evil, then he is impotent.

P₄ If God is unwilling to prevent evil, then he is malevolent.²⁶

P₅ If God is able and willing to prevent evil, then there is no evil.

P₆ If God exists, then he is neither impotent nor malevolent.

P₇ If God is either unable or unwilling to prevent evil, then he is either impotent or malevolent.

P₈ It is not the case that God is both able and willing to prevent evil.

P₉ God is either unable or unwilling to prevent evil.

∴ God is either impotent or malevolent.

Where E is substituted for 'evil exists', G for 'God exists', W for 'God is willing to prevent evil', A for 'God is able to prevent evil', I for 'God is impotent', and M for 'God is malevolent', the argument might be symbolized in this fashion:

P ₁ E	Given
P ₂ G	Given
P ₃ $\neg A \supset I$	Given
P ₄ $\neg W \supset M$	Given
P ₅ $(A \cdot W) \supset \neg E$	Given
P ₆ $G \supset (\neg I \cdot \neg M)$	Given
P ₇ $(\neg Av - W) \supset (IvM)$	from P ₃ , P ₄
P ₈ $\neg(A \cdot W)$	from P ₁ , P ₅
P ₉ $(\neg Av - W)$	from P ₈
<hr/>	
(IvM)	from P ₃ , P ₄ , P ₉ (complex constructive dilemma)

That the conclusion is equivalent to 'God does not exist' cf. Plantinga's proposition (q) in conventional theism should mean only that the conventional description of Divine nature is at least partially misguided - this insofar as part of the conventional description of God involves the notion that He is both omnipotent and omnibenevolent. By DeMorgan, P₆ is equivalent to $G \supset \neg (IvM)$. Hence, (IvM) entails $\neg G$. As I see Hume's argument, however, the conclusion reached is not that God does not exist, but that if God exists (P₂) he must be either impotent or malevolent. A general overriding question of the Dialogues is the question of whether one can know anything about the Divine from natural

experience - much less whether or not we can know he exists. Relative to questions concerning the Divine, Hume stated already in part 2 of the Dialogues that

where reasonable men treat these subjects, the question can never be concerning the being, but only the nature of the Deity.²⁷

To refrain from speaking in part 10 about the being of God is in keeping with this maxim.

Plantinga points out that in order to deduce a logical contradiction from the primary assertions of theism relevant here,²⁸ the atheologian must find a necessarily false proposition among the essential tenets of theism, or he must show that a necessarily false proposition is a consequent of such tenets.²⁹ Plantinga asserted earlier that the proposition 'certain cases of evil surely appear to be unjustified' (and hence should be taken as such) is a contingent claim, but nonetheless one which does constitute damaging evidence against (e) ct. Plantinga's avowal that interpretation (2) presents a valid objection to (e) . Still, a much stronger case against (e) would require the truth of the claim that 'all states of evil are necessarily unjustified' [cf. interpretation (1)] - a claim which Plantinga considers unsubstantiated. Plantinga's emphasis here on finding necessary propositions which conflict with the tenets of theism is a prelude to his discussion of the Humean enterprise via the first interpretation. I will contend that the claim 'all states of evil are necessarily unjustified' is sound, and that there then is a necessarily false proposition entailed by the theistic tenets cited immediately above (viz. the theistic claim that 'some states of evil are justified' as will be asserted in lieu of the atheist's claim that a given case of evil [one

offered as a practical example] is unjustified, and asserted as a first step toward the claim that 'all states of evil may just as well be justified'). The atheist's search for a necessary proposition does seem to be warranted as a way of avoiding a problem hinted at in the above parenthetical remark. The "Impasse" of which Plantinga speaks evolves when the theist and atheist are deadlocked in discussion over a given instance of evil - a case which each party needs to win in order to preserve the truth of his respective universal claim.

It is true that all the atheist should finally seek is one case of unjustified evil. In order to establish with certainty that a given case of evil is unjustified, however, the atheist does need the supportive universal proposition. In order to avoid the "impasse," he must first avoid the subtle bit of verificationist theory (relative to the verification of universal propositions) which, if unchecked, allows that "impasse" to occur. His argument must rather proceed from general rules concerning our language about "evil" and "benevolence," to specific cases where that language finds its application.

While Hume's argument, at least as I have formulated it, appears to be logically correct, the argument does still seem to require the addition of certain other premises - premises stated or described above - in order to guarantee its soundness. The argument should require some clear indication as to why no evil states ought to be considered justified where God (as an agent) is concerned. J.L. Mackie seems to provide an avenue for accomplishing this when he seeks to provide a set of logical rules "connecting the terms 'good', 'evil', and omnipotent'." The additional premises required would be that, according to Mackie,

good is opposed to evil, in such a way that a good thing always eliminates evil as far as it can, and that there are no limits to what an omnipotent thing can do.³⁰

On the basis of these connections, I believe it possible to show that 'all states of evil are necessarily unjustified' [hereafter $\Box(x) (E_x \supset U_x)$] should be accepted - this on the basis of our language concerning evil and the willful act of allowing evil states to exist. The proposition $\Box(x) (E_x \supset U_x)$ will be offered as a refutation of (r). The method will be to show that on the basis of $\Box(x) (E_x \supset U_x)$ there exists at least one case of unjustified evil, and hence (r) cannot be accepted. It is in actuality only this single case of unjustified evil which the atheist needs to show -M. Still, it seems to me that Plantinga is correct in requiring $\Box(x) (E_x \supset U_x)$ as a prerequisite for singling out one case of evil which beyond any doubt must be construed as unjustified. Contra Plantinga, however, my contention is that we can legitimately obtain that prerequisite.

It is the theist himself who focuses attention on the question of God's omnibenevolence, for if he is to take issue with any portion of Hume's argument, the fourth premise (viz. $-W \supset M$) will come to be the likeliest candidate. The theist will quite obviously not deny the clear existence of some evil in the world, nor would he wish to claim that God is unable to prevent such evil. Divine 'omnipotence' is, after all, a most unique characteristic - a basic quality which, when combined with the notion of 'omniscience', provides the fundamental distinction between Divine and human natures. His only recourse, then, is to attempt to justify God's unwillingness to prevent evil - this in order to affirm (reaffirm) God's omnibenevolence. That is, he wishes to affirm that God could be

unwilling to prevent evil, but that this would not entail God's malevolence.

In order to establish the connection between God's apparent unwillingness to prevent all evil and his malevolence, the atheist might well claim, as Mackie does, that "a good thing always eliminates evil to the fullest extent possible." This is intended to mean, of course, that where God is also omnipotent and omniscient, the existence of any evil whatever would at least jeopardize the theistic notion of omnibenevolence.

A theistic rejoinder to this claim is that an omnibenevolent being could be justified in allowing evil to exist, provided he has a good reason. This is to say, any state of evil could be allowed to exist for the sake of some greater good which would follow only if such an allowance were made.

To this the atheist might reply that in order to deny P_4 , the theist must show that every evil state of affairs is justified by being necessary to the accomplishment of some greater good or goods.

To this the theist might reply that to establish only that the evil in the world may perhaps be justified is sufficient for casting doubt upon the truth of the proposition 'If there is any evil whatever in the world, God is malevolent.' As Nelson Pike states,

if the proposition 'There is good reason for evil in the theistic universe' (i.e. 'there are motives or other factual considerations which, if known, would render blaming God for evil inappropriate') could be true, then the logic of the phrase 'perfectly good person' allows that the propositions 'God is a perfectly good person' and 'God allows evil in the world although he could prevent it' could be true together. This point rests on the fact that a perfectly good person can allow

evil, provided he has a good reason. Since the first of the three propositions just mentioned is clearly not contradictory and thus could be true, the conjunction of the latter propositions is also free of contradiction and the contention that a perfectly good person would of necessity prevent evil if he could is shown, beyond question to be in error.³¹

The claim here is that the proposition 'All evil states are unjustified' (in support of the proposition, 'If there is any evil whatever in the world, God is malevolent') is surely not a necessary proposition. If the truth of that assertion were decidedly not analytic, the atheologian might still wish to claim that its truth can be known in a posteriori fashion. He might claim it inconceivable, for example, that any more worthy good could come of, say, the wanton death of innocent people. Still, the theist might entertain some notion of a higher good which might result from such a state of affairs, a good state of affairs which outweighs the evil of the former state. This would seem then to pose a logical impasse which neither natural theology nor natural atheology could resolve, and neither of the disputants would need have involved himself in a logical contradiction in reaching that impasse.

In pursuing the first interpretation of Hume's argument, it is precisely this "impasse" which Plantinga attempts to achieve. In order to reach such an impasse, however, it seems to me that one has to overlook the force of the conventional moral language which governs our notion of 'evil'.

If we are to treat the problem of evil as a problem reducible to differences of ethical opinion, as I now wish to do, some comment on the nature of "evil" clearly seems to be in order. As H.J. McCloskey points out, there are two classes of evil which should be distinguished. Instances of moral evil³² evolve out of some volitional act on man's part,

and the term "evil" comes to be applied to actions which contradict some basic moral norm or norms imposed by convention. Moral evil seems conventionally to be the most serious of all forms of evil, but the basis for adopting this notion is not always the same. The theist will usually contend that moral evil is a direct act against the moral dictates of the Divine (although this betrays an unconventional (unnatural) concept of morality). He will contend that moral evil is the most heinous form of evil because "sin" is the most serious of all evils. If, on the other hand, moral evil is likewise for the atheist the most serious case of evil, it is usually because such evil is the willful product of a free moral choice. Now, if man can avoid the performance of at least some evil acts, any instance of at least the most readily avoidable moral evil is surely most perverse.

On the other hand, physical evil³³ exists apart from any human agency. There is a myriad of examples of human evil (famine, floods, unpreventable genetic deformities, etc.), and, of course, many cases of such evil result in pain or suffering for innocents.

One might question here the notion that there can be "evil" which is uncaused (re: physical evil). This question is not discussed here, however, whether it means

- i There can be no uncaused "evil."
- or
- ii There can be no "evil" except that a human agent is involved.

We have assumed in this section that God exists, and the question here concerns God's agency in light of the fact of evil. If we are shown an instance of evil where no human agent is involved (ii), we will assume

that God as a moral agent is involved. In a manner fully as curt, we will reply to (i) by simply stating that we are here interested in that evil which is caused, if only by God, and will hence accept (i) without further comment.³⁴ In effect, physical evil here will come to be viewed as 'moral evil', insofar as God is presumed involved as a moral agent with physical evil. The underlying intent is to view Divine agency relative to physical evil in the same way that one views human agency relative to, properly speaking, moral evil.

The existence of physical evils should pose the greatest problem for the theist, and thus the strongest case for the atheist. In speaking of moral evil, I stated that instances of such evil would be considered by theist and atheist alike to be the most serious form of evil. While the complete explanations differ, both theists and atheists seem generally to agree that moral evil is more serious because human (moral) agency is involved. The fact that human agency is involved, however, makes for a more complex situation so far as the question of God's moral agency goes. The theist will opt for the free will argument; the atheist will also wish to speak at some length concerning moral volition - particularly if the theist introduces the free will argument. Since this section deals with questions of Divine agency and responsibility relative to the existence of evil, it seems to me that a more direct way of approaching that problem is, if possible, to omit cases which involve any human responsibility - to discuss human responsibility only as an analogue to Divine responsibility. The fact of physical evil would seem to allow us that much, while still providing a sound means for getting at the (moral) problem of evil. Again, all the atheist will finally

need to show the truth of Hume's fourth proposition is one instance of unjustified physical evil.

In a case of physical evil, no human agency is supposedly involved, and hence no human responsibility. The theist's claim, on the other hand, might be that the existence of physical evil can serve as a catalyst in encouraging either (1) the victims of such evil or (2) the outside observer to alter his intentions in such a way as, say, to seek the moral way. Hence a case of physical evil comes subtly to be viewed as neutral so far as human agency (responsibility) is concerned in that particular case. Yet, that case of physical evil can still be essential to the accomplishment of some other (and presumed greater) good. Just how such evil can be deemed essential (supposing that an omnipotent being could surely find other means to the same end) is an objection which should be raised here by the atheist.

If we choose any one of the myriad occurrences of physical evil - the latest Peruvian earthquake disaster, for example - we have a case for consideration. Now, the atheist will wish to claim that this is one case of unjustified evil. In taking issue with this claim, the theist will conventionally assert that there may be a greater good which will follow out of this evil state of affairs - one which will outweigh the evil of the former state.

The atheist should then challenge the theist to show with certainty what such a state of affairs will be. Given the gravity of the evil taking place, the atheist is well within his rights to demand a full guarantee that a better state of affairs will result.

could. The theist might at this point contrive some state which he takes to be a better state of affairs. On the previous page I spoke in a general way about a couple of possibilities relating to the view of physical evil as essential to moral enlightenment (if that case can be summarized in this fashion). Just how one could learn anything from physical evil is surely not clear, though neither is it completely mystifying. The question as to the necessity of physical evil in accomplishing such an end, however, is surely far more fundamentally damaging. Another approach might involve the suggestion that the disaster spoken of in the example facilitates the long run survival of more lives than were lost in the actual occurrence of physical evil. (Consider Malthusianism as a possible principle here.) Particularly where the question is over the seemingly needless loss of a vast number of human lives, however, the question arises concerning the legitimacy of quantitatively measuring human worth. (That, as it might be claimed, it is better for one to die than for a thousand - providing that one were forced to choose.)

Let it suffice here to say that the theist does arrive at a plausible description of a possible better resultant state. He must then be saddled with the even more difficult task of showing why the given instance of evil is the only possible way such a state of affairs could be achieved, and this would seem to present a problem which natural theology cannot resolve. Included here is the notion that the theist must show that the extent of evil allowed does not exceed the minimal extent necessary to the achievement of the proposed good.³⁵ If in the example employed above we can conceive of a lesser evil which

could just as well have accomplished the same good, we will have also shown that the instance of evil was not the only way that the proposed good could have been achieved. Given the earthquake example, is it not possible by the very least bit of imagination to suppose that the same effect could have been achieved with only one less life being lost? To pose the question is, I think, to answer it. The unavoidable conclusion is that there is a different situation which could have achieved the same effect. In order to show this, the atheist does not even need to offer a completely different sample situation, but only alter the old one.

Now, there has arisen serious question as to the worth of employing paradigm cases, but ethical assertions - unlike assertions belonging to the province of logical possibility - find their test for validity precisely in casuistry. If there is one factor which sets ethics apart from other philosophical enterprises, it is that ethical meanings always seek concrete situational application for their meaningfulness. This logic of ethical language is conventionally a potent weapon against those who, willingly or not, seek to abuse it.

The only final test we have for any ethical claims is to inquire whether conventional ethical meanings are being prostituted, and if so with what possible justification.

The situational use of ethical terms such as "evil" conventionally calls for the conclusion that no state of evil if it could be or could have been prevented is justified. In those cases where there was no humanly possible way of our preventing a present state of affairs suspected of being evil (i.e. when the question of justification does

not involve our having caused the situation), it is still the case that if the origin of that state of affairs can be shown to be a result of unjustifiable moral action - if the situation was avoidable - moral men seek to right that evil situation. When the origins of suspected evil are unknown, or in those cases where no injustice need have been involved in origination (i.e. when evil in that situation was unavoidable), we in effect assign the test of whether anyone could presently be justified in allowing this situation to occur. If not, and provided that the situation is presently avoidable, the situation is viewed as decidedly unjustifiable and steps are taken to correct it.

Where peripheral situations are involved, there can surely be a reasoned difference of opinion as to whether the given situation should be taken to be an unjustifiably evil state of affairs. Still, where the loss of human life is involved, a situation must be considered unjustified until it is clearly and undubitably shown otherwise. While the question remains as to whether even some such evil states can be justified, it is surely accepted as true that when human lives are lost and such a loss might just as well have been avoided while accomplishing the same ends, an unjustified evil state of affairs must have been perpetrated. Anyone responsible for perpetrating that evil would surely be found guilty of committing an immoral act.

Now, as was mentioned above, there are instances where rational men differ as to whether a particular evil state is justified (i.e. over the question of whether allowing that state to exist will guarantee the accomplishment of a greater good - one which "outweighs" the evil of the present state, and which could be achieved only if that evil state

were allowed to exist). Justifications for wars, as a case in point, conventionally are based upon the notion that the war in question is unavoidable if a given worthy end is to be achieved. That such a war is necessary is in turn explained by the claim that forces beyond the speaker's control have precluded any other means for accomplishing that end. If the matter of justification is pressed further, the speaker is most likely to claim that the question of justification (and hence moral responsibility) should better be directed at those other forces who have allowed the situation to evolve in the first place. If they knowingly perpetrated an avoidable situation which, for correction, would make war necessary, then they should be held morally responsible. Assuming that the speaker can guarantee that (1) a greater good will result, and that (2) war is the only means for accomplishing that end, the inquisitor would conclude that the evil of the given war is justifiable (provided, of course, that he first accepted the notion that some wars might be justifiable). Hence, he would have no moral grounds for further objection.

It seems reasonable to expect, then, that purely humanistic ethics does leave open the possibility that we may rightly view some evil as justified. In the above example of moral evil, it should become clear that, as a matter of fact, we do conduct our ethical business with this possibility in mind.

Now to assert that the simple fact of such conduct is a sufficient ethical vindication for continuing to act in this manner might seemingly carry with it a shadow of naturalism. Still, if the fact of our conduct can be explained as a necessary consequent of accepted use

of moral language, we should not have involved ourselves with the naturalistic fallacy. Moral language intricately embodies conventional ethical tenets in such an intimate manner that "rules" cannot be altered without one's altering that language. Hence, to press inquiry to the point where the only answer can be "But that is simply what we mean by 'justified evil'" is by no means a victory for the moral skeptic. If he wishes to challenge that answer, he is forced either (1) to show that we in fact mean something different (and more "correct") than the claimant asserts, or (2) to change the conventional moral language involved. To attempt (2) is tantamount to philosophical suicide.

In the example case cited above, a 'justified state of evil' was seen to refer to that evil state of affairs which, while regrettable in the larger sense of its being forced upon us, was nonetheless presently an unavoidably necessary condition for the achievement of some greater good. The use of 'justification' in that situation was, as I wish to contend, fully in keeping with its conventional use. Now if the conventional meaning of that ethical term was not prostituted, it would be up to the skeptic to show that our ethical language concerning that notion somehow led us into "justifying" an action which was not really justifiable. But such an assertion would not even be intelligible. If we can no longer rely upon conventional language and the conventional precepts subsumed by such language, the notion that there is some other moral sanction available - and a language describing such sanctions - is surely completely mystifying.

Still, theism in its claim to God's omnibenevolence seems to lead in that direction.

intended While we can justify our allowing some evil states to exist i.e. - $\neg (x) (E_x \supset U_x)$, the notion of 'omnibenevolence' coupled with 'omnipotence' (given what these terms conventionally mean) makes it impossible for us to justify God's willingness to allow any evil state to exist. It will not do to simply say that such classical "theological" descriptions of God have their own technical meanings. Taken by itself there is nothing objectionable in this claim, since nothing has been asserted which would prevent our finding out what those meanings are. As that claim is applied, however, the theist makes the subsidiary claim that no one with the exception of God himself fully comprehends these meanings.

Now these terms might not be employed at all were it not for their theological uses, but it is far from clear that they could not be divorced from these theological moorings. We can imagine, for example, what an all-powerful person would be, and the same should apply to notions such as omnibenevolence and omniscience. As a matter of fact, it is impossible to fully picture what such a person should be like, and there are questions as to what limitations, if any, should be placed in applying the concept (cf. note 30). Still, the relevant question is whether or not our conceptualization here is sufficient enough to apply to the question of evil. My contention is that it is.

It seems to me that the additional premises suggested by Mackie (p. 33) do provide at least a basis of agreement concerning the meanings and connected use of the relevant notions. There surely seems reason to suppose that at least in some instances we can expect basic agreement on the use of these terms, and the few cases I have provided here are

intended to draw out this claim. Furthermore, there seems no reason to suppose these uses should differ in other situations, although each new situation might well carry with it different and possibly more intricate complexities. In short, there can very well be some cases where the truth of $\Box (x) (E_x \supset U_x)$ is not readily apparent, but we can at least expect that meanings will not be altered - that the difficulties lie in application to additional complexities.

The obvious point to be made regarding the difference between human and Divine responsibility is hardly a very subtle one. That we may rightly believe some evil states justifiable stems from the fact that mere mortals are neither capable of consistent benevolence, nor are we likely to be suitably aware of much beyond our immediate moral predicaments. That we continue to make tragic errors in our ethical conduct is surely explicable, though we never cease to hope that such errors can be corrected with minimal damage done.

Even where an evil state exists as the only possible means to some good end - even a far better one - it is within the capacity of even such short-sighted mortals to envision that far better situation where no evil need have been involved at all. While our own vision of that situation is limited, the God of the theistic tradition in his omniscience was capable of that full vision - but in spite of his omnipotence chose not to render us that better possible world. It may be, as the theist claims, that God has his own ineffable reasons. Still, as Archibald MacLeish so aptly captures the point,

If God is God, He is not good,
If God is good, He is not God.³⁶

Where evil exists, if God is omnipotent he is not all-good, while if God is all-good he is not omnipotent. In the face of existent evil, in order to make "omnibenevolence" compatible with "omnipotence" (such that both could properly be predicated of God), the theist must alter the language of "omnibenevolence" (if discussion centers around Hume's fourth proposition) to the point that it becomes meaningless (cf. what Mackie, my p. 33). We simply would not expect that an all-good person who had the power and foresight to safeguard that description would ever need to justify any evil state. Hence the notion of "weighing" the 'evil' of one situation against the 'good' of another should hardly be relevant to such a person's procedure for making moral decisions.

The theist, on Plantinga's account, attempts to vindicate God by applying the same notion of 'justified evil' that we employ in humanistic ethics. Such a move is surely legitimate enough. Still the same notion of 'justified evil', while it seems to vindicate some of our own moral conduct, makes such a vindication impossible where God is the sole moral agent involved (cf. the case of physical evil). What this finally amounts to is that, given the notions of "omnibenevolence" and "omniscience"), $\Box (x) (E_x \supset U_x)$ is true where God is involved as the sole moral agent.

It is certainly the theist's prerogative to faithfully believe that "God has His own reasons." Still, if those reasons cannot presently be formulated, the theist cannot show that there even could be such reasons, and hence that God should not be charged (by conventional norms) with immorality.³⁷

When the atheist asserts that $(x) (E_x \supset U_x)$ is necessarily true, he means that given the language which comprises that proposition, it is impossible for that proposition to be false when coupled with the notions of "omnibenevolence" and "omnipotence." It follows from that proposition that if any particular evil whatever exists, then (necessarily) God is unjustified in allowing that state to exist. Just what the notion of 'justification' involves, however, must first be shown. This can only be shown by the use of paradigms - and this, again, because ethical meanings are always shown by reference to real situational contexts.

There is one sense in which the theist himself might betray the weakness of his ethical position. It would seem that if the theist really believed that all evil were necessary in the Divine plan for achieving a greater good, he would be bound by the logic of his ethical position not to attempt a correction of any evil state of affairs. Yet, this assertion might be a bit too broad, since (as was spoken of earlier) some states of evil might be taken to somehow facilitate a greater good which is nothing other than someone's willing to correct that situation. If the assertion is modified to state that the theist must refrain from corrective action in even some correctable cases of evil, however, and if the only reason given is that God has some benevolent plan - one unknown to mortals - which necessitates such evil, then the theist would by conventional standards be committing an immoral act in his self-imposed restraint. He would be guilty of breaking the conventional rule that if any case of unjustifiable evil is preventable, it ought to be prevented.

to the Now whether any theist has in fact opted for such "justifiable" inaction is surely an interesting question - and particularly if, as it might be claimed, such inaction has been common in theistic circles. Further, that question surely ought to be treated if my argument against such theistic conduct can finally be shown to have a bearing on real ethical cases - that is to say, that theists really do in this manner betray a highly unconventional (and hence highly suspect) ethical stand. All I have wished to suggest is that this tension between ethical positions is likely to occur if the theist acts consistently with his ethical predispositions. I hasten to add, however, that opting for such an unconventional position would have to constitute an immoral act - and that conclusion is based upon a contention that conventional ethical notions such as "justified evil" are certainly properly bound to situational application.

I wish finally to contend, then, that Plantinga's proposition (r) ("God is justified in allowing every evil state to exist.") can be shown false, and hence that (1) proposition (q) (i.e. $\neg G$) comes to be true, and that (2) the argument which shows (r) to be false provides a rather solid indication that $\Box(x) (E_x \supset U_x)$ is true.

The purpose of the present chapter has been two fold. First, I have wished to discuss in its own right Plantinga's treatment of the problem of evil - this since I suspect Plantinga's claim that the force of the atheistic argument from evil lies in the force of conventional language which constitutes that argument. My general suspicion is that the primary claim in God and Other Minds overlooks the legitimate force which language exerts in philosophical argumentation. The "solution"

to the question of other minds will hence be offered here, contra Plantinga, from the point of view of our language concerning other minds. The position taken in this chapter regarding the efficacy of language, then, is offered as a prelude to the perspective of the following sections.

OTHER MINDS BY ANALOGY: THE ANALOGICAL ARGUMENT

The question of whether other minds exist is, of course, an academic question. Yet, it is precisely our fundamental predilection to believe in the existence of other minds which engenders the problem of other minds. The question is one of formal certainty - not whether we can be certain, but how it is that we are certain. Given my undaunted propensity to believe that other minds do exist, how is that belief to be formally justified?

In his Theory of Knowledge, Chisholm distinguishes three degrees of belief. As he states,

... a proposition can be called "acceptable" (for a given person at a given time) if withholding it is not more reasonable than believing it; it can be called "reasonable" if believing it is more reasonable than withholding it; and it can be called "evident" if it is reasonable and if there is no proposition more reasonable than it.³⁸

Now belief in the existence of other minds, like belief in the existence of an external world, appears to be at least a "reasonable" belief, and I suspect that most of us are at the outset even inclined to call such a belief "evident." Still, it is not easy to see just what evidence will formally substantiate such a belief. The questions here concerning acceptable evidence are legion. The quandary over the Wittgensteinian sense of "criteria" given rise to the suspicion that any final answers

will not be readily forthcoming. On the other hand, such finality is not always a realistic philosophical goal, and philosophers might at times be obliged to settle for a clear rendition of the proper questions - this with a more or less general directive for seeking any such final answers.

CHAPTER IV

OTHER MINDS BY ANALOGY: THE ANALOGICAL ARGUMENT

Plantinga suggests that the analogical argument stands as the best justification for belief in other minds, even in spite of the problems inherent in that position. One cannot easily do justice to Plantinga's contribution unless one examines the reasons for the success, however limited, of the analogical argument. The question is one of formal certainty - not whether we can be certain, but how it is that we are certain. Given my undaunted propensity to believe that other minds do exist, how is that belief to be formally justified?

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will not be readily forthcoming. On the other hand, such finality is not always a realistic philosophical goal, and philosophers might at times be obliged to settle for a clear rendition of the proper questions - this with a more or less general directive for seeking any such final answers.

Plantinga suggests that the analogical argument stands as the best justification for belief in other minds, even in spite of the problems inherent in that position. One cannot finally do justice to Plantinga's contribution unless he examines the reasons for the success, however limited, of the analogical argument. Still, an analysis of the major claim in God and Other Minds (i.e. the proposed likeness between theistic belief and belief in other minds) need not require such an examination. That claim can be of primary interest only if, as on Plantinga's account, the teleological and analogical arguments provide the best justifications for the respective beliefs in question. It might well be that there are important similarities between "analogical" belief in God and such belief in other minds, and a treatment of such similarities might surely provide a unique way for approaching the question of theistic belief. One might still claim that the teleological argument is the best justification for theistic belief, and go on from there. If God and Other Minds opens the way for such an inquiry, as seems to me to be true, Plantinga's contribution is surely a fascinating and important one. Still, his major claim is too strong, and this is what I wish to show.

The suggestion here will be that P.F. Strawson's position as developed in his Individuals,³⁹ provides a better "solution" than the

analogical argument to the question of other minds. This claim will be based upon the notion that Strawson's position sufficiently avoids the problems inherent in the analogical view. Further, since Plantinga would not seem to disqualify the stance Strawson suggests, there seems little reason to suppose that we need rely upon the analogical argument for a justification of belief in other minds. I am not arguing that Strawson's position is the best available one. I do wish to argue that the analogical argument promises a host of difficulties from the outset, and hence that it would be better, if we can, to completely avoid the argument. Further, the analogical argument remains an inductive argument, and any non-inductive justification for belief in other minds surely remains preferable.

At first sight, the analogical argument seems to provide a completely sane and natural justification for belief in other minds. Since Wittgenstein, however, the analogical argument has fallen into ill repute. The argument from analogy, it is presently most often claimed, fails to establish with certainty its proposed essential correlation between my physical and mental states on the one hand, and as a further step the correlation between these states and those which Jones might experience. It might be that formal certainty is not available here, but one does not readily relinquish hope. We are inclined to expect a formal account of the certainty which, in some fashion, we clearly possess.

Mill provided the following version of the analogical argument:

I conclude that other human beings have feelings like me, because, first, they have bodies like me, which I know, in my own case, to be the antecedent condition of feelings; and because, secondly,

they exhibit the acts, and other outward signs, which in my own case I know by experience to be caused by feelings. I am conscious in myself of a series of facts connected by an uniform sequence, of which the beginning is modifications of my body, the middle is feelings, the end is outward demeanor. In the case of other human beings I have the evidence of my senses for the first and last links of the series, but not for the intermediate link. I find, however, that the sequence between the first and last is as regular and constant in those other cases as it is in mine. In my own case I know that the first link produces the last through the intermediate link, and could not produce it without. Experience, therefore, obliges me to conclude that there must be an intermediate link; which must either be the same in others as in myself, or a different one: I must either believe them to be alive, or to be automaton: and by believing them to be alive, that is, by supposing the link to be of the same nature as in the case of which I have experience, and which is in all other respects similar, I bring other human beings, as phenomena, under the same generalizations which I know by experience to be the true theory of my own existence.⁴⁰

Included in this formulation is the notion that physical, mental, and behavioral states must somehow be "linked" together, and the question of just how these connections can be facilitated remains at issue.

Perhaps these considerations could be included in a formulation such as the following:

(1) I am presently in a particular state of pain, since:

(i) I recall past situations where when physical state α obtained, it was correlated (occurred with) mental state σ .

(ii) α and σ are identical with the present states.

(2) Whenever the correlated states α and σ obtain in my case, behavioral state β obtains.

(3) Jones over there exhibits a behavioral state identical with β .

(i) Jones has a body similar to my own.

(ii) I know from past observation that Jones' particular physical states are sometimes accompanied by particular behavioral states.

(4) Jones is apparently experiencing physical state α .

(5) Probably Jones is experiencing mental state γ .

(6) Probably Jones is in pain.

Now it is surely superfluous to qualify premises (5) and (6) as in the above manner, since these premises are clearly inductively obtained.

Still, it is not yet clear that (6) is equivalent to 'I know that Jones is in pain', and consider the difference in what might be achieved by the following addition:

(7) In almost all past cases where Jones exhibited behavioral states comparable to β , he was in pain.

(i) In all such past cases, Jones conceded that he was in pain, and

(ii) Jones has never lied to me in any other matters.

(8) Jones is in pain.

While (8) is still achieved inductively, we might be inclined to accord it more certainty than we did in the case of (6). The question, of course, concerns the logical weight which should be accorded to first person avowals of, say, 'pain'. In the above case, the evidence of a behavioral state is combined with such an avowal, taken as another piece of evidence, in order to achieve (8). One's impression is that (1)-(6) needs the addition of some such premise as (7) in order to achieve (8).

Wittgenstein suggested the possibility that a necessary relationship exists between behavior and the state of 'being in pain', though he would not seem clearly to intend that such a relationship does exist. As Malcolm has pointed out, Wittgenstein was wary of the notion that an entailment relationship could be established between someone's observed behavior and (in a case such as 'pain') his supposed mental state.

Witness to this Wittgenstein's assertion that here we must be on guard against thinking that there is some totality of conditions corresponding to the nature of each case (eg. for a person's walking) so that, as it were, he could not but walk if they were all fulfilled.⁴¹

Still, the quest for a possible entailment relationship continues, and as an example witness Shoemaker's observation that

One wants to say that we know such statements first person avowals to be true when we assert them, or at least that we often or generally know them to be true; that we are justified in asserting them, or entitled to assert them; and that this can be explained only on the supposition that we make such statements because we observe, or know directly, that the criteria for their truth are satisfied - for it is clear that we do not make such statements on the basis of indirect inductive evidence.⁴²

The upshot of Shoemaker's discussion is finally that third person ascriptions, if based in part upon such first person incorrigibles, are (in effect) necessarily usually true cf. [(7)-(8)]. The analogical arguer would at any rate not seek any such interpretation of (7) - if he felt the need to include the extra evidence provided by (7) in the first place. His case is based upon the contention that the behavioral "link" between physical and mental states is a contingent one.

How then is this claim to be viewed?

In the above passage, Shoemaker is referring to the question of how much I can formally trust my own first person avowals, and this suggests another problem with the analogical argument. We can determine that Jones is displaying pain-behavior provided we know what 'pain-behavior' is. In order to know what 'pain-behavior' is, on the analogical view, we look first to our own case.

On Mill's account, we would seem to find out what 'pain-behavior' in our own case is by inference. As he states in the passage quoted earlier,

I am conscious in myself of a series of facts connected by an uniform sequence of which the beginning is modifications of my body, the middle is feelings, the end is outward demeanor.⁴³

But is this really the way in which I come to know that I am in pain?

Consider propositions (1)-(2) of my formulation as an analogue of what

Mill asserts:

(1) I am presently in a particular state of pain since:

(i) I recall past situations where when physical state α obtained, it was correlated (occurred with) mental state γ .

(ii) α and γ are identical with the present states.

(2) Whenever the correlated states α and γ obtain in my case, behavioral state β obtains.

Now it simply is false that I come to know by inference that I am in pain. The certainty which accompanies such knowledge is immediate and, for all one can determine, incorrigible. The assertion 'I think I am in pain', for example, is either meaningless or equivalent to 'I am in pain'. But if the knowledge that I am in pain is uninferred, it becomes clear that I do not rely upon an "observation" of my behavior for a determination of whether I am 'in pain'. This is not to say that behavior is not important to the meaning of my 'being in pain'. That behavior is vital in this sense, however, is a point of logical significance (What is the meaning of 'being in pain?'), rather than one of temporal significance (How do I in fact self-ascribe 'pain?'). Now an answer to the temporal question is impossible unless the logical question is first resolved. In like manner, one should not be able to understand the meaning of 'pain-behavior' unless he first understood the broader notion of 'being in pain'.

Malcolm suggests that the analogical argument can provide no guarantee that I can be certain of my own state of 'being in pain' - that I cannot know that I am in pain. The problem, on Malcolm's view, is that there is no guarantee that the correlations - "links" - as suggested in Mill's argument are correct ones. The substance of his criticism is that

my impression that I follow a rule does not confirm that I follow the rule, unless there can be something that will prove my impression correct. And the something cannot be another impression - for this would be "as if someone were to buy several copies of the morning paper to assure himself that what it said was true" (265). The proof that I am following a rule must appeal to something independent of my impression that I am. If in the nature of the case there cannot be such an appeal, then my private language does not have rules, for the concept of a rule requires that there be a difference between 'He is following a rule' and 'He is under the impression that he is following a rule' - just as the concept of understanding a word requires that there be a difference between 'He understands this word' and 'He thinks that he understands this word' (cf. 269).⁴⁴

The primary question, of course, is whether a private language is even possible in principle, and there is a host of ramifications to that question. The core of the private language problem here is that a language for pains is not possible on the analogical approach. What this contention finally amounts to is that the meanings which comprise our language about mentalistic notions cannot be arbitrary in the sense which the analogical arguer suggests. The difference in point of view here centers around the notion that meanings cannot be something over and above conventional (public) use - a notion which is of course the mainstay of the Wittgensteinian tradition.

Now without such a framework for a language about my own mentalistic states, it is impossible to provide correlations between these

states and those which Jones might experience. As Ryle stated in his well-known refutation of Cartesianism,

Advocates of the double-life legend will answer that understanding the chess-player's moves consists in inferring from the visible moves made on the board to unwitnessable operations taking place on the player's private stage. It is a process of inference analogous to that by which we infer from the seen movements of the railway-signals to the unseen manipulations of the levers in the signal-box. Yet this answer promises something that could never be fulfilled. For since, according to the theory, one person cannot in principle visit another person's mind as he can visit signal-boxes, there could be no way of establishing the necessary correlation between the overt moves and their hidden causal counterparts. The analogy of the signal-box breaks down in another place. The connections between levers and signal-arms are easy to discover. The mechanical principles of the fulcrum and the pulley, and the behavior of metals in tension and compression are, at least in outline, familiar to us all. We know well enough how the machinery inside the signal-box works, how that outside the signal-box works and how the two are mechanically coupled. But it is admitted by those who believe in the legend of the ghost in the machine that no one yet knows much about the laws governing the supposed workings of the mind, while the postulated interactions between the workings of the mind and the movements of the hand are acknowledged to be completely mysterious. Enjoying neither the supposed status of the mental, nor the supposed status of the physical, these interactions cannot be expected to obey either the known laws of physics, or the still to be discovered laws of psychology.⁴⁵

Given the problems concerning the nature of mentalistic states as well as the discrepancies regarding the nature of language, it is extremely difficult to see that the analogical argument could provide an acceptable answer to the question of other minds.

Now the view which Strawson espouses in chapter three of Individuals would subvert the analogical argument, insofar as that view precludes the problem which the analogical argument is intended to solve.

As Strawson states, his notion of "persons" is

not intended to suggest how the 'problem of other minds' could be solved, or our beliefs about others given a general philosophical 'justification'.⁴⁶

It is rather the case that

such a 'solution' or 'justification' is impossible, that the demand for it cannot be coherently stated.⁴⁷

I wish to show here in some brief fashion what constitutes the core of Strawson's position.

In section five of "Persons," Strawson provides the following sketch of his core argument:

[1] There would be no question of ascribing one's own states of consciousness, or experiences, to anything, unless one also ascribed, or were ready and able to ascribe, states of consciousness, or experiences, to other individual entities of the same logical type as that thing to which one ascribes one's own states of consciousness.

[2] The condition of reckoning oneself as a subject of such predicates is that one should also reckon others as subjects of such predicates.

[3] The condition, in turn, of this being possible, is that one should be able to distinguish from one another, to pick out or identify, different subjects of such predicates, i.e. different individuals of the type concerned.

[4] The condition, in turn, of this being possible is that the individuals concerned, including oneself, should be of a certain unique type: of a type, namely, such that to each individual of that type there must be ascribed, or ascribable, both states of consciousness and corporeal characteristics.⁴⁸

Now the concept of a person is according to Strawson a primitive concept. What this means is that a person is just that type of entity of which both psychological predicates (P-predicates) and material predicates (M-predicates) can be ascribed, but that a person as a type of entity is not something apart from, nor over and above, that entity which admits of both P and M ascriptions. A person is to be viewed as a unity of 'mind' and body - of psychological and material characteristics. On Strawson's account, this primitive notion of a person necessarily underlies any ascriptive reference to persons, such that our language concerning persons is possible if and only if that precedent notion obtains.

Now with this in mind, 1 strikes directly at the analogical argument. What 1 asserts is that other-ascription is a necessary condition of self-ascription. What it involves is the notion that behavior provides a logically adequate criterion for third person psychological ascriptions, and what results is that the analogical argument [cf. my (1)-(6)] has nothing whatever to do with our knowledge of other minds. The problem of other minds is in fact precluded, as well as the proposed solution.

The language concerning a mental state according to Strawson, involves both the notion that (1) it is something felt but not observed by the experiencing subject, and that (2) it is something observed but not felt by others besides the subject. As Strawson states in citing depression as an example

X's depression is something, one and the same thing, which is felt, but not observed, by X, and observed, but not felt, by others than X.⁴⁹

In other words the concept of depression carries with it both notions (1) and (2).

Now one might object at this point by saying that there might occur states of depression which go 'unrecognized' by everyone but the experiencing subject (i.e. where (2) does not obtain). But while this is surely true simply as a matter of fact (eg. I might sufficiently disguise my feelings, or I might suffer depression at a time when no one else is around to observe), this assertion has no bearing upon Strawson's case. Strawson's point, again, is that (2) is a necessary counterpart of the concept of depression, such that one could not even self-ascribe 'depression' if he had not understood the language scheme which gives that term its meaning. The threat here is that:

When we take the self-ascriptive aspect of the use of some P-predicates, say 'depressed', as primary, then a logical gap seems to open between the criteria on the strength of which we say that another is depressed, and the actual state of being depressed. What we do not realize is that if this logical gap is allowed to open, then it swallows not only his depression, but our depression as well. For if the logical gap exists, then depressed behavior, however much there is of it, is no more than a sign of depression. But it can only become a sign of depression because of an observed correlation between it and depression. But whose depression? Only mine, one is tempted to say. But if only mine, then not mine at all. The sceptical position customarily represents the crossing of the logical gap as at best a shaky inference. But the point is that not even the syntax of the premises of the inference exists, if the gap exists.⁵⁰

And further,

If one is playing a game of cards, the distinctive markings of a certain card constitute a logically adequate criterion for calling it, say the Queen of Hearts; but, in calling it this, in the context of the game, one is ascribing to it properties over and above the possession of these markings. The predicate gets its meaning from the whole structure of the game. So with the language in which we ascribe P-predicates to say that the criteria on the strength of which we ascribe P-predicates to others are of a logically adequate kind for this ascription, is not to say that all there is to the ascriptive meaning of these predicates is these criteria. To say this is to forget that they are P-predicates, to forget the rest of the language-structure to which they belong.⁵¹

Plantinga's criticism of Strawson would seem to be reducible to the dual claim that (1) Strawson provides no description of how we in fact learn to other-ascribe mentalistic states, and (2) that Strawson's view precludes the possibility of our coming to other-ascribe such states. Subsidiary to these related claims, and particularly to (2), Plantinga contends, first, that Strawson fails to clearly establish the criteriological relationship between behavior and mental states, and then that this relationship is a necessary condition for both other-ascription and self-ascription. Now (2) is the stronger of the two claims, and the following is an account of this second objection.

The argument to which Plantinga directs his attack appears on page 102 of Individuals. In that section Strawson argues that the "way of telling" that an individual "possesses" a given P-predicate must involve more than just a sign that the individual is in the appropriate state of consciousness. The way of telling must rather

constitute in some sense logically adequate kinds of criteria for the ascription of P-predicates.⁵²

Plantinga offers the following formulation of Strawson's argument here:

- (1) If P-behavior is not a logically adequate criterion for the ascription of pain, P-behavior is a sign of pain.
- (2) If a person N knows at a time t that P-behavior is a sign of pain, then at some prior time t-1 N observed a correlation between P-behavior and pain in his own case.
- (3) If at t-1 N noted a correlation between pain and P-behavior in his own case, then N was able to predicate pain of himself at t-1.
- (4) If at t-1 N was able to predicate pain of himself, then at t-1 N knew how to predicate pain of others.
- (5) If at t-1 N knew how to predicate pain of others, then at t-1 N knew that P-behavior is a sign of pain.

Step (6) would be a repetition of (2) with "t-1" substituted for "t" and "t-2" for "t-1." Steps (7), (8), and (9) would parallel (3), (4), and (5); step (10) would again parallel (2) with the substitution of "t-2" for "t" and "t-3" for "t-1"; and so on. The conclusion Strawson draws, of course, is that if P-behavior were not a logically adequate criterion for the ascription of pain, no one could ascribe pain to anyone else; and hence no one could ascribe pain to himself either.⁵⁴

Now (4) is taken by Plantinga to be identical with Strawson's premise [1], as I have enumerated the premises in the argument quoted in this section on page 59. Roughly, that premise amounted to the assertion that other-ascription is a necessary condition for self-ascription. (4) is then restated on Plantinga's account as

- (4a) If at t-1 N was able to predicate pain of himself, then

at $t-1$ N had a conception of the appropriate occasions for predicating pain of others,⁵⁵

and (5) comes to be

(5a) If at $t-1$ N had a conception of the occasions appropriate for ascribing pain to others, then at $t-1$ N knew that P-behavior is a sign of pain.⁵⁶

Plantinga's claim here is that the notion "knowing how to predicate pain of others" cf. (4) is ambiguous. That ambiguity is only somewhat more disguised in (4a), and occurs again in (5a). The objection is directed at (5a), then, and goes as follows:

But it is not at all clear that (5a) ought to be accepted. Suppose that in accordance with step (2) N could know that P-behavior is a sign of pain only if he had observed a correlation between P-behavior and pain. At time $t-2$, before he has observed any such correlation, N might take the following declaration: If I observe a connection between my pain and P-behavior on my part at $t-1$, then any occasion after $t-1$ on which I observe P-behavior which is not mine will be an appropriate occasion for predicating pain of someone else. If he were to make such a declaration, he would "have a conception of the circumstances appropriate for predicating pain of someone else," although he would not then know that P-behavior is a sign of pain, for he would not have made the requisite observation. Hence it seems that step (5) cannot be accepted.⁵⁷

What this criticism seems to overlook, however, is the whole notion that the way in which we are enabled to make any mentalistic ascriptions is through a necessary feature of language. Plantinga is claiming, here at least, that the assertion "In order to self-ascribe P-predicates, one must be able to other-ascribe them" means that one must in fact ascribe, say, pain of someone else temporally prior to his being able to self-ascribe pain.

Strawson's meaning here, however, is very much in keeping with the Wittgensteinian notion of what knowing the concept of 'pain' means. The learning process by which one comes to know the concept of pain does not - cannot - include some sort of random 'ascription' of pain prior to

one's knowledge of what pain means in the language. An infant, for example, might in a highly tenuous sense be said to "know" pain if it reacts to a pin-prick. This sense of 'to know', however, is highly uninteresting if it makes any sense at all. On Strawson's account, the infant surely is not going through the process of self-ascription, for he cannot. He has no notion at all of the meaning of 'pain'.

But this is simply to restate Strawson's basic ascription without further argument. The analogical arguer will wish to contend that the developing child's continued encounters with the sensation we label 'pain' will allow for his own language of 'pain' - that he will come to make the correct association of mental with physical states, quite apart from any outside criteria whatever. What is also asserted is that there is some sort of "inner sensation" concerning which we can speak coherently. The move then is simply to translate this presumably correct self-ascription into the form of other-ascription.

In an account of section 302 of the Investigations, however, Malcolm states

A proponent of the privacy of sensation rejects circumstances and behavior as a criterion of the sensations of others, this being essential to his viewpoint. He does not need (and could not have) a criterion for the existence of pain that he feels. But surely he will need a criterion for the existence of pain that he does not feel. Yet he cannot have one and still hold to the privacy of sensation. If he sticks to the latter, he ought to admit that he has not the faintest idea of what would count for or against the occurrence of sensations that he does not feel. His conclusion should be not that it is a contradiction, but that it is unintelligible to speak of the sensations of others.⁵⁸

Further,

"That there should be thinking or pain other than my own is unintelligible," he ought to hold. This would be a rigorous

solipsism, and a correct outcome of the assumption that one can know only from one's own case what the mental phenomena are. An equivalent way of putting it would be: "When I say 'I am in pain', by 'pain' I mean a certain inward state. When I say 'He is in pain', by 'pain' I mean behavior. I cannot attribute pain to others in the same sense that I attribute it to myself."⁵⁹

Now Strawson is making the logical point that no one can properly be said have the concept of, say, pain unless he understands the meaning of 'pain' as it is used in the language. Further, knowing how 'pain' is used in the language entails in part that one know how to other-ascribe pain, and this completely precludes on logical grounds the notion that (1) one could correctly self-ascribe pain prior to his being able to other-ascribe pain, since (2) such prior 'self-ascription' (if it can be called that) would not involve an understanding of the meaning of 'pain'.

If there were no general agreement that there is necessarily a connection between behavior and mental states, other-ascription would be impossible - or at least a considerably more tenuous practice than it in fact is. Now to assert that the connection between behavior and mental states is merely contingent is to open the door to senseless questions concerning the nature of mental states in themselves. The claim that a necessary link exists between behavior and mental states, on the other hand, need not require an answer to questions such as the above. All one need know is that our conventional language concerning mental states surely involves, where other-ascriptions come into play, a notion that the vast majority of judgments about mental states, as based upon behavioral criteria, will be true. To ask for more than this eventually results in questions concerning the specific natures of both 'behavioral states' in themselves and 'mental states' in themselves. This in turn eventually

results in a dualistic conception of the mind-body relationship - and this is to lose sight of the primitive notion of a person.

Now claim (1) can be avoided simply by saying that Strawson is attempting to provide a logical overview for the matters discussed in philosophy of mind. His conceptual scheme does not, as claim (1) asserts, provide a description of how in fact we come to other-ascribe - but the success of Strawson's scheme does not depend on the inclusion of such a description.

Until we are able to say a great deal more about the exact nature of such "things" as mental states, such a description is not possible. It is not even clear what we should look for, however, and any description of how we in fact come to other-ascribe mentalistic states will surely presuppose too much.

The upshot of this brief discussion is that Plantinga would not seem to prevent our adopting of Strawson's view - one which does provide the element of logical certainty for which we had hoped. Now if Strawson's position remains credible, there is at the outset no reason for dependence on the analogical view - a view which, on Strawson's account, provides a very bad answer to a very bad question.

lengths in regard to that particular idiosyncrasy. The gist of Hume's objection would appear to be that the theistic enterprise is at best a rather harmless (though tenuous) venture, and at worst a threat to accepted life-style. Perhaps the following passages best capture this point:

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Whereas religious beliefs, which at all, operate only by starts and bounds; and it is scarcely possible for them to become altogether habitual to the mind. . . . Who can explain the "All I have seen teaches me to trust the Creator for all I have not seen."

-Emerson

In part 12 of the Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion, Philo states,

I must confess . . . that I am less cautious on the subject of natural religion than on any other; both because I know that I can never, on that head, corrupt the principles of any man of common sense, and because no one, I am confident, in whose eyes I appear a man of common sense, will ever mistake my intentions. . . . A purpose, an intention, or design strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker; and no man can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at all times to reject it.⁶⁰

In reference to the last portion of this passage, Plantinga states,

Philo concedes that the universe certainly seems initially to resemble things we know to be designed; the impression that the universe has been designed is hard to avoid. . . .⁶¹

But is Hume making a concession here? The point of the passage would seem to be only that common sense is bent upon "seeing" purpose and design in the universe - a tendency which Hume, by his own avowal, apparently also admits in his own case. The difference between explanation and justification remains vital to the Humean enterprise, however, and that distinction should certainly be weighed in an interpretation of the above passage. If we do have a tendency to see design in the universe, it remains a puzzle to Hume that some should go to such religious

lengths in regard to that particular idiosyncrasy. The gist of Hume's objection would appear to be that the theistic enterprise is at best a rather harmless (though tenuous) venture, and at worst a threat to accepted life-style. Perhaps the following passages best capture this point:

Whereas religious motives, where they act at all, operate only by starts and bounds; and it is scarcely possible for them to become altogether habitual to the mind. . . . Who can explain the heart of man, or account for those strange salvos and excuses, with which people satisfy themselves, when they follow their inclinations, in opposition to their religious duty? . . .

We must further consider, that philosophers, who cultivate reason and reflection, stand less in need of such motives to keep them under the restraint of morals: And that the vulgar, who alone may need them, are utterly incapable of so pure a religion as represents the Deity to be pleased with nothing but virtue in human behaviour. The recommendations to the Divinity are generally supposed to be either frivolous observances, or rapturous ecstasies, or a bigoted credulity. We need not run back into antiquity, or wander into remote regions, to find instances of this degeneracy. . . .

But even though superstition or enthusiasm should not put itself in direct opposition to morality; the very diverting of the attention, the raising up a new and frivolous species of merit, the preposterous distribution which it makes of praise and blame, must have the most pernicious consequences, and weaken extremely men's attachment to the natural motives of justice and humanity. . . . The bad effect of such habits, even in common life, are easily imagined; But where the interests of religion are concerned, no morality can be forcible enough to bind the enthusiastic zealot. The sacredness of the cause sanctifies every measure which can be made use of to promote it.

The steady attention alone to so important an interest as that of eternal salvation is apt to extinguish the benevolent affections, and beget a narrow, contracted selfishness. And when such a temper is encouraged, it easily eludes all the general precepts of charity and benevolence.

Thus the motives of vulgar superstition have no great influence on general conduct; nor is their operation very favourable to morality, in the instances where the predominate.⁶²

Now if the religious enterprise is at times merely a frivolous inquiry, on Hume's account, the strongest opposition to that enterprise

should be voiced when conventional moral principles are thwarted. The best account of how theism might constitute such a threat can be found in Hume's discussion of the problem of evil - this insofar as God's omnibenevolence can seemingly be accepted only at the exclusion of certain conventionally held moral principles. Chapter III here was intended to develop that account, and it seems to me that Hume's objection at that juncture was a valid one. Even when the theistic enterprise does not constitute a clear threat to conventional morality, however, Hume would not seem ready to tolerate such an inquiry. It is the "diverting of attention" from "natural motives" to which Hume objects, and this objection can constitute a much broader criticism. It involves the whole empiricistic notion as to what philosophy shows to constitute legitimate belief, and this broad notion is very difficult to capture. It is a judgment about the nature of philosophical inquiry itself.

Nonetheless, the subject of this paper finally involves this question insofar as it involves the question of how a particular belief comes to be justified. I have wished to show, contra Plantinga, that belief in the existence of other minds should best be "justified" in a non-analogical and non-inductive manner. Now even if the best argument for the existence of God is an analogical (hence inductive) one, the question of justified belief there is no different from the question of justified belief in the case of other minds. The same questions (i.e. questions) about the nature of belief itself apply to both belief in the existence of other minds and belief in the existence of God. Hence, I have wished to claim that basically these two beliefs constitute the same sort of opistemic problem. What this amounts to, of course, is the

far less provocative (and less interesting) claim that all beliefs are basically "in the same epistemological boat," and this notion of epistemic similarity is obviously not as specific as Plantinga's notion. A denial of Plantinga's application of "in the same epistemological boat" is achieved only with a view toward the specific sense he intends that phrase (i.e. that belief in God and belief in other minds are both justifiable by the same type of argument).

When we say a belief is "justified" we conventionally mean that the "evidence" for that belief is stronger than the "evidence" against it, and this pre-supposes that we have taken into account all forms of evidence relevant to the question concerning that particular belief.

I have intended in this paper to speak to the four claims outlined on page 5 of Chapter I. Again, these claims are:

- (1) The negative evidence relative to traditional theistic belief is stronger than the supporting evidence.
- (2) The analogical argument for the existence of other minds speaks only to a quasi-problem.
- (3) Belief in other minds is "justifiable" in a tangential manner, via an argument based upon the premise that our conventional language about "persons" provides a sound basis for the necessary truth of the propositions that
 - (a) other minds exist, and
 - (b) behavioral criteria provides a sound means for correct third-person ascriptions.
- (4) Certain theological propositions might be "meaningful" in spite of the fact that no natural empirical evidence (either affirmative or negative) obtains.

By claim (1), I mean that as a whole the negative evidence brought against conventional theism's notion of "God" outweighs the affirmative evidence. What this has come to mean, via Plantinga's account (see Chapter II), is simply that there is more evidence against theistic

belief than there is for it. I have agreed with Plantinga's assertion that the design argument confers some evidence on proposition (a) ("The universe is designed.") but that no evidence suitably supports propositions (b)-(f) (see p. 11). Chapter III was intended to provide a stronger reason than Plantinga admits for the negation of proposition (e) ("The creator of the universe is omniscient, omnipotent, and perfectly good.").

Chapter IV was intended to support claims (2) and (3), and the primary purpose of that chapter was to show that Plantinga's specific claim for the similarity between belief in God and belief in other minds need not be accepted.

The emphasis on language in Chapters III and IV, however, is intended as a prelude to the fourth and final claim. What I have to say about claim (4) is very tentative, and is offered here as little more than a springboard for further inquiry.

The sense in which claim (1) is offered here allows it to be offered as basically a separate claim. Still, (1) does encompass a body of very complex subsidiary claims. The primary question is that of just what evidence will count for or against the validity of theological propositions. The question of theistic belief in this paper (and with particular reference to (1)) is primarily centered around the question of whether natural theology can be successful. The extent to which the teleological argument fails, on Plantinga's account, would certainly seem to warrant a claim that the natural evidence as a whole clearly exceeds the affirmative evidence. Yet, there are qualifications to be placed on the claim that theistic belief is unjustified - a claim which would seem to be entailed by (1).

There does seem some reason for believing that Plantinga's proposition (a) ("The universe is designed.") could be considered valid on the basis of natural evidence. Furthermore, (a) does sketchily assert something even though it is unsupported by propositions (b)-(f). Its claim is that the universe looks to have been designed by some "intelligence," though there is no clear indication as to exactly how that "intelligence" might further be described. If natural theology cannot, say, by the analogical approach provide any further meaning for proposition (a), revealed theology surely could attempt to do so.

Now the matter of revealed theology might simply be disregarded, except that Plantinga attempts to investigate the "belief" of the Hebraic-Christian tradition. What this comes to is the question of whether the "God" of that tradition can be shown to exist on the basis of natural evidence. But traditional theism surely does not depend to any great extent on that possibility. Since (a) seems in its own weak sense to be true, and since (a) is a tenet of both natural and revealed theology, something might well be added concerning the latter enterprise.

I wish to raise the possibility, as voiced very briefly early in Chapter II, that some theological propositions might be "acceptable" just in case they cannot be refuted or affirmed on the basis of natural evidence. The question of what might count against the contention is the subject of the present chapter.

There are those philosophers who have questioned whether theological utterances are to be classified as "propositions" in the first place. Ayer, of course, is the best known proponent of the view that such utterances do not constitute propositional assertions. In a manner reflecting

his basic point of view, for example, he states that

to say that "God exists" is to make a metaphysical utterance which cannot be either true or false. Any by the same criterion, no sentence which purports to describe the nature of a transcendent god can possess any literal significance.⁶³

Anthony Flew is also disposed to view theological utterances as something other than propositions - subtle commendations ("concealed ethics"), for example.⁶⁴ Still, it is surely not at all clear that the theist is not asserting something or other - something which is intended to have a direct effect on life-style and conduct. That he is making an assertion comes to be particularly clear if he is willing, for example, to gear his moral conduct to the supposed truth of such "assertions." The question according to Ayer and Flew would be whether such utterances as are involved in the determination of conduct are susceptible to falsification. As Flew remarks,

What would have to occur or to have occurred to constitute for you a disproof of the love of, or of the existence of, God?⁶⁵

The meaning of 'meaning' is obviously not an easy matter, but the approach which Ayer and Flew take toward all theological propositions would, for example, preclude any possibility that analogical evidence could ever substantiate a theological proposition. Yet, Plantinga's proposition (a) did seem validly inferred.

Now it may well be, as occurs in the question of evil, that the theist might opt for the "God has his reasons" view - that he might finally come to rely upon principles of revealed theology for a justification of his beliefs. The analogical approach, however, might just as well be applied to the question of whether some propositions of revealed theology are "meaningful." Propositions (e) and (f), taken as tenets of

revealed theology, cannot be analogically derived. On the other hand, (a) might well be offered as a tenet of revealed theology, and that proposition can be analogically derived.

One might simply state that all relevatory evidence is meaningless, but it seems to me that the problems of "meaning" can just as well be avoided by posing the question of whether the tenets of theism should finally have any bearing on life-style and conduct. What this amounts to is the question of whether theistic belief is basic as, say, belief in the existence of other minds is basic. As Hume seems successfully to show, theism's most vital tenets can be falsified, and the rest are inconsequential in the sense mentioned above.

As was seen in Chapter III, moral philosophy cannot allow ethical decisions to be based upon dubious preconditions. As Hume points out in the passage cited above, such a basis for morals can provide a threat to conventional norms, and the seeming validity of this contention comes out in his discussion of the problem of evil. As was intended in the treatment of that discussion here, Plantinga's proposition (e) would not seem redeemable by reference to revelatory theology. The reason, again, is that reliance upon principles of revealed theology ("God has his reasons") would necessitate a basic alteration of some conventional moral principles - principles which are grounded in conventional ethical language.

The description of God as a disembodied mind [proposition (f)] is susceptible to similar criticism. In this case, however, what is at stake is a basic ontological commitment rather than a moral one. One need not be a thorough-going empiricist, particularly not in the verifi-

cationist sense, in order to have some qualms concerning proposition (f). In order to accept proposition (f), one would be forced into accepting the Cartesian view of persons.

The primitive notion of a "person," on Strawson's account, entirely precludes our having to consider mental stoffs, for to consider questions concerning "the" mental apart from question concerning the physical is to lose sight of that primitive notion. In short, we "see" persons as subjects of both corporeal and mental predicates.

Now Strawson does assert that disembodied existence is logically possible (i.e. conceivable), but all this claim seems to amount to is that 'being alive' in the conventional sense is not as a matter of fact necessary to the notion of personal identity. (Again, Strawson is interested in making a logical point relating to the concept of a person.) The analogy is drawn here between the way in which we speak of a dead person and

the same secondary way we might at least think of a disembodied person.⁶⁶

The corpse formerly denoted by 'Jones' and ostensibly referred to in the expression 'Jones is dead' is not really what we mean to denote by 'Jones'.

As Peter Klein states,

Although the expression 'Jones is dead' does have the same syntactical form as 'the glass is round' it does not attribute a property, death, to an object, Jones. Rather it is used in a way similar to 'the house burned down' or 'my wallet has been stolen' (uttered by someone who believes that possession is none-tenths of the law). These expressions are elliptical ways of saying that what once was Jones, the house, or my wallet is no longer correctly characterized by 'Jones', 'the house', or 'my wallet'.⁶⁷

In other words, the concept of a person is not at stake here, for it is that concept which makes possible the secondary notion of disembodied

(or disanimated) existence.

If disembodied existence is conceivable, on Strawson's view, we cannot on that view entertain any notion of a "God" who has never been the subject of material predicates. Were it not for the notion that the Divine is capable of person-like actions, proposition (f) would amount to nothing more than an assertion of sheer immaterialism. It is in light of the theistic attempt to ascribe to God the ability to act, however, that the primary concept of God is seen to be derived from a commitment to dualism. The notion of a persistent mental stuff is simply incomprehensible, as Hume was quick to point out. If the claim to meaninglessness applies to any of the theistic propositions suggested in this paper, it most clearly applies to proposition (f). Given the language which embodies our basic ontological commitments, proposition (f), like proposition (e), can be redeemable on the basis of neither natural nor revealed evidence.

If propositions (e) and (f) are beyond saving, however, perhaps (b)-(d) can be redeemed on the basis of revelatory evidence. In light of Hume's observations (above) and the application of those observations to (e) and (f), however, we might be in a position to stipulate conditions which must obtain if revelatory evidence is to be admitted. Let us say (i) that no conventional moral principles may be threatened, and (ii) that neither the evidence offered nor the proposition to be affirmed may threaten our conceptual framework.

Now one might at this point treat the remaining individual propositions, but the direction of the reduction is clear enough. The only propositions which might be admissible on the basis of non-natural evi-

dence (including supportive propositions) are those which have no significant effect on conventional commitments [ct. (a)]. This, of course, is diametrically opposed to the theistic reason for offering these assertions in the first place. On the one hand, the intent of theism is to provide an ethical framework which forms the basis for conventional morality cf. (i) . On the other hand, that framework is intrinsically couched in an "other-worldly" metaphysical perspective cf. (ii) .

If natural theology can have some success in showing (a) to be valid, that proposition also finally falls prey to the above considerations. When, on the basis of natural evidence, (a) is completely self-contained relative to its limited meaning, there is still no reason to suppose that revealed theology can be a source for further description - none at least which theism should find suited to its basic goals. We can accept the possibility that (a) might be valid, but that proposition by itself simply says nothing of interest.

In Chisholm's terms, proposition (a) might be taken to be an "acceptable" proposition - this insofar as withholding belief in it is no more reasonable than accepting it (cf. p. 55). There are problems with this hypothesis, however - problems which might well reflect basic problems in Plantinga's claim that belief in God is "rational."

G.E. Hughs suggests that Plantinga might have in mind a distinction between "giving a reason for holding that p is true" and "giving a reason for believing that it is rational to believe that p."⁶⁸ Simply on the basis of a weighing of relevant evidence, Plantinga would seem to contend that there is reason for holding (a) to be true. It remains unclear as to whether there is more reason to hold (a) to be true than

reason to deny (a). Plantinga "recommends" (a) in very negative fashion, insofar as he shows that Hume offers no good reason to believe that the universe does not resemble a product of intelligent design.

Yet, belief in God is finally said to be "rational," on Plantinga's account, and in a sense comparable to that in which belief in other minds can be called rational. As Hughs seems to intend, there is something a great deal stronger about the claim that a belief is "rational." or interest - this is such evidence is at best tentatively

admitte Now the least we should say about a "rational" belief is that the believer should be clearly able to recommend that belief. Further, given what Plantinga seems to intend by the notion that belief in God and belief in other minds are "in the same epistemological boat," that belief in God is "rational" should mean that theistic belief is somehow basic. philosophy to be suspicious concerning the intention and precommitments

In the first place, there is no reason to believe that proposition (a) could be readily recommended. As Hume states in the passage quoted earlier in this chapter, we do seem to have the curious propensity to "see" design in the universe. The question, however, is whether anything can formally be concluded from the notion that the universe looks to be designed. Proposition (a) is, of course, a statement of just that notion, and stripped to its barest form. In its bare form, proposition (a) means so little as to seemingly make it worthless to even the theistic enterprise. belief constitutes a basic belief. Tomberlin

points The further question is whether any other evidence might be offered in support of (a) - evidence which might provide a clue as to what (a) could be further intended to show. Plantinga himself rules

rules out the possibility that any further natural (analogical) evidence could serve that purpose, and his arguments against propositions (b)-(f) might only be further strengthened by variant approaches. If conventional theism is at issue, there is the further possibility that revelatory evidence could be offered to support and further substantiate (a). As I have briefly wished to argue, however, we will wish to restrict revelatory evidence in such a way as happens to preclude its being of much aid or interest - this if such evidence is at least tentatively admitted as evidence in the first place (cf. Ayer, Flew).

In short, there is little reason to believe that anyone should be at all interested in recommending (a) as a proposition which ought to be accepted. Conventional theism will of course have its "theological" purposes for recommending (a), but, again, there surely seems reason for philosophy to be suspicious concerning the intention and precommitments underlying the theistic enterprise. What remains the paradox here - though probably not a serious one - is that someone who believes (a) for reasons which can neither be clearly argued for or against on the basis of natural evidence is in a sense "justified" in his belief of (a). We might wish to term such belief foolish or trivial, but (a) just might be an "acceptable" proposition - and one's belief in (a) might hence be considered justified.

The more fundamental question raised by Plantinga's thesis is that of whether theistic belief constitutes a basic belief. Tomberlin points out that the notion of a "basic belief" should apply to each individual's own case - that what belief is "basic" for one individual may not be so for another.⁶⁹ Now Plantinga's thesis depends upon the

claim that if belief in God is "basic" for the theist, and if our basic belief in other minds is best justified in the same best manner as belief in God, then belief in God is likewise justified.

The argument can be questioned at each juncture. In the first place, one needs an independent argument to show that theistic belief is basic for the theist. In the sense Tomberlin intends (above), it is trivially true that the theist's belief in God is "basic" to his theism. I suppose one might also claim that our belief in other minds is also basic in something of a tautologous sense (hence, trivially "basic") - though it takes a position such as Strawson's to make formally clear what is obviously informally presumed to be the case.

Now since belief in God is simply not basic to everyone, and further since belief in other minds is clearly basic in an unequivocal sense, then since the best justification for belief in other minds will have to provide an account of the certainty which universally obtains, there seems little reason to adopt Plantinga's thesis.

The primary difference between theistic belief and belief in other minds is that the former is not a basic belief, while the latter is. If the theist does consider his belief "basic" - even in his own case - he is likely to find ready conflicts with such beliefs as properly are basic, and this paper attempts in a highly conventional manner to suggest those conflicts.

My conclusion regarding the fourth claim is a rather simple one. It might be the case that certain theological propositions are "acceptable" in light of an absence of relevant natural evidence. It is also my suspicion that in view of the restrictions which must be observed,

the only propositions which might fit this description are uninteresting for both theism and atheism alike.

God and Other Minds offers a startling view of how theistic belief might be justified. Owing to his reliance on the analogical argument, Plantinga's major premise is obviously bound to generate criticism from widely disparate points of view. Still, and possibly in spite of his major thesis, Plantinga's conclusions regarding the teleological argument do open the door to a host of interesting ramifications.

I have attempted in this paper to suggest a few of the considerations which are suggested by his analysis of the design argument. While I have accepted Plantinga's basic conclusions regarding propositions (a)-(f), the analysis I have wished to provide for the particular propositions (a), (e), and (f) was intended in each case to be from a rather different point of view. Proposition (a) is of course most important to Plantinga's conclusion regarding the success of the teleological argument, since (a) is the only proposition which, on Plantinga's account, can be considered true. The primary question I have wished to pose with regard to (a) is whether that proposition is of much utility.

It seems to me that rank and file atheism most likely stems from a view that theistic belief is simply not essential enough to warrant the anxious assent which theism resolves to exact. While propositions (e) and (f) appear to contradict certain basic ethical and ontological commitments, one's reasons for not wishing to believe (or at least take seriously) proposition (a) might well result from a suspicion that (a) simply is of little or no value. One need not claim that (a) is false or "meaningless" in order to rationally decide against accepting it. If

this point of view can be taken to reflect a prevalent attitude toward theistic belief, it seems to me that a clear and complete exposition of a justification for that attitude might still provide the most successful case against the theistic enterprise.

The primary question raised in God and Other Minds is whether theistic belief can be formally justified. The answer provided would seek to class the question of theistic belief with that of belief in the existence of other minds. This in turn raises the question of why theistic belief should be considered so vital an issue, and Plantinga does not seem to provide an answer to that question. It is a conclusion of this paper that theistic belief, on Plantinga's description and following his careful scrutiny, would not seem to merit the sort of consideration which the primary thesis of God and Other Minds prescribes.

4 Hume, David. Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. New York: Robbs-Merrill, Inc. 1947.

5 Ibid. p. 143, quoted by Plantinga, p. 96.

6 Plantinga, p. 96.

7 Ibid. p. 100.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid. p. 97.

10 Ibid. pp. 99-100.

11 Ibid. p. 100.

12 Ibid. pp. 100-101.

13 Ibid. p. 97.

14 Hume. pp. 148-149.

15 Ibid. p. 144.

16 Plantinga. p. 110.

17 Ibid. p. 106.

18 Hume. pp. 167-168.

NOTES

Chapter I

1 Plantinga, Alvin. God and Other Minds. New York: Cornell University Press, 1967.

2 Plantinga. p. 271.

21 Hume. p. 171.

22 Plantinga. p. 106.

Chapter II

3 See Rodrick Chisholm's sense of "acceptable" propositions, ch. IV, p. 55. The notion that some "theological" propositions cannot be recommended but yet are "acceptable" will be provided fuller comment in chapter V. What this notion involves is that (1) "acceptable" propositions are those which can neither be confirmed or disconfirmed on the basis of natural evidence - either by matters of fact or logic. (2) There is the possibility that some theological propositions fall into this class. (3) Such propositions, if believed by someone, are "acceptable" for the believer alone. The believer cannot recommend such belief on the basis of natural evidence, just as no one can show on this same basis that the proposition in question is "unacceptable."

4 Hume, David. Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion. New York: Robbs-Merrill, Inc. 1947.

5 Ibid. p. 143, quoted by Plantinga, p. 96.

6 Plantinga. p. 96

7 Ibid. p. 109.

8 Ibid.

9 Ibid. p. 97.

10 Ibid. pp. 99-100.

11 Ibid. p. 100.

12 Ibid. pp. 100-101.

- 13 Ibid. p. 97.
- 14 Hume. pp. 148-149.
- 15 Ibid. p. 144.
- 16 Plantinga. p. 110.
- 17 Ibid. p. 106.
- 18 Hume. pp. 167-168.
- 19 Ibid. p. 179. cf. p. 161.
- 20 Plantinga. p. 110.
- 21 Hume. p. 171.
- 22 Plantinga. p. 106.

33 I am indebted to Dr. R.W. Moneys for this observation.

36 Macleish, A. J.B. Camb. Chapter III. The Riverside Press. 1958.

23 Ibid. p. 108.

24 Ibid. "Sophia, vol. 7, no. 1, April, 1968, p. 16. 'recapitulation of the 'epistemological verification' and so on - have a relevance by

25 Ibid. p. 1271 questions concerning proof and disproof are out of place.

26 Not to will to do X is meaningful only if one has the power to do X if he so chooses. Hence, that God is able to prevent evil is a presupposition contained by definition in the phrase 'unwilling to prevent evil'.

Chapter IV

27 Hume. p. 142.

28 viz. (a) God exists, (b) God is omnipotent, (c) God is omniscient, (d) God is wholly good, (e) Evil exists. Descriptive Metaphysics. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc. (Anchor Books edition). 1959.

29 Plantinga. p. 117.

30 Ibid. Plantinga adds another qualification, viz. that there are no non-logical limits to what an omnipotent being can do. God is omnipotent only if God can perform any action that it is logically possible for him to perform. (Ibid. p. 118. cf. Hume. p. 201) This means that God's omnipotence does not include his ability to function somehow outside of the law of non-contradiction.

Such a qualification does not allow the theist to so readily relegate apparent contradictions concerning the nature of God to that etherial province of "the mysteries of the Divine" - to paradox. It is

also a necessary basis for any discussion whatever concerning the nature of God, for if God can shun the law of non-contradiction there is nothing in our language game adequate to discussing his nature. The question of whether natural theology (or atheology) can make assertions concerning the nature of God then certainly becomes a moot question, quite regardless of any other considerations.

31 Ibid. pp. 123-124.

32 McCloskey, H.J. "God and Evil," Pike, N. (ed.) God and Evil. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1964. pp. 65-67.

33 Ibid. pp. 63-65.

34 A much stronger assertion would be to say that God (since he exists) is the cause of all evil. This is to grant too much to the atheist, however - at least at this point in the discussion. Further, all the atheist wishes to achieve is one case of unjustified evil, hence to show that God must be malevolent.

35 I am indebted to Dr. R.W. Momeyer for this observation.

36 MacLeish, A. J.B. Cambridge, Mass.: The Riverside Press. 1958. p. 11.

37 Compare to a comment by F. Gerald Downing in "God and the Problems of Evil." Sophia, vol. 7, no. 1, April, 1968. p. 16. "recapitulation, 'eschatological verification' and so on - have a relevance by analogy, even while questions concerning proof and disproof are out of place."

Chapter IV

38 Chisholm, R. Theory of Knowledge. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1966. p. 41.

39 Strawson, P.F. Individuals: An Essay in Descriptive Metaphysics. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc. (Anchor Books edition). 1959.

40 Malcolm, N. "Knowledge of Other Minds," Chappell, V.C. (ed.) The Philosophy of Mind. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc. 1962. p. 151.

41 Wittgenstein, L. Philosophical Investigations (Anscombe trans.). New York: Macmillan Co., Inc., 1953. paragraph 183.

42 Shoemaker, S. Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity. New York: Cornell Univ. Press, 1963. p. 214.

- 43 See note 40.
- 44 Malcolm, N. "Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations," Chappell. op. cit. p. 76.
- 45 Ryle, G. The Concept of Mind. New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1940. p. 52.
- 46 Strawson. op. cit. p. 109.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Ibid. p. 100.
- 49 Ibid. p. 105.
- 50 Ibid. p. 106.
- 51 Ibid. p. 107.
- 52 Ibid. p. 102, quoted by Plantinga. p. 228.
- 53 "In order to simplify matters, I shall specify the argument with respect to a certain kind of mental state, pain, and the 'ways of telling' appropriate to that state which I shall call P-behavior." (Plantinga. p. 229.)
- 54 Plantinga. p. 229
- 55 Ibid. p. 230.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Ibid.
- 58 quoted from Malcolm, "Wittgenstein's Philosophical Investigations." Saunders and Henze. The Private Language Problem. New York: Random House, Inc., 1967. p. 107.
- 59 quoted from Malcolm, "Knowledge of Other Minds." Saunders and Henze. op. cit. p. 108.

Chapter V

- 60 Hume. op. cit. p. 214.
- 61 Plantinga. p. 106.
- 62 Hume. pp. 221-223.

63 Ayer, A.J. "Critique of Theology." Nagel, E. and Brandt, R.B. (eds.) Meaning and Knowledge. New York: Harcourt, Brace, & World, Inc., 1965. P. 47.

64 Flew, A. "Theology and Falsification." Nagel and Brandt. op. cit. p. 51.

65 Ibid. p. 52.

66 Strawson. p. 99. (*italics mine*).

67 Klein, Peter. "'Are Strawson's Persons Immortal?' A Reply." Philosophical Studies, vol. XX, no. 5, October 1969. p. 69.

68 Hughs, G.E. "Plantinga on the Rationality of God's Existence." The Philosophical Review. April, 1970. p. 249.

69 Tomberlin, James E. "Is Belief in God Justified?" The Journal of Philosophy, vol. 67, no. 2, Jan. 29, 1970. p. 36ff.

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